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# Municipal Emergency Management Collaborations Learnings Report

Final Report (July 2017)

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AV | Ambulance Victoria |
| CFA | Country Fire Authority |
| EMC | Emergency Management Commissioner |
| EM Cop | Emergency Management Common Operating Picture |
| EMV | Emergency Management Victoria |
| ERC | Emergency Relief Centre |
| DELWP | Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning |
| ICC | Incident Control Centre |
| IMT | Incident Management Team |
| LGV | Local Government Victoria |
| MAV | Municipal Association Victoria |
| MEMEG | Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Group |
| MERO / MRM | Municipal Emergency Resource Officer / Municipal Recovery Manager |
| MFB | Metropolitan Fire Brigade |
| RCC | Relief Coordination Centre |
| REMPC / MEMPC | Regional EM Planning Committee / Municipal EM Planning Committee |
| SOG / SOP | Standard Operating Guidelines / Standard Operating Procedures |
| VMIA | Victorian Managed Insurance Authority |
| VicPol | Victoria Police |
| VicSES | Victorian State Emergency Services |

# Executive Summary

Victoria's seventy nine (79) councils have been collaborating with neighbouring municipalities on various aspects of emergency management (EM) planning and service delivery for many years. These Collaborations have not occurred as a result of a directive or legislation from the State or Commonwealth governments but voluntarily, from lessons learnt after major emergencies such as the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires.

This independent study was undertaken to improve the sector's understanding of the various formal and informal ways in which local governments are coming together under a 'collaborative model' in EM. The study included extensive engagement and consultation with the collaborative groups to gather insights on 'how, why and when' groups are working together. This report is the culmination of that study and provides an opportunity to present a baseline information and insights about the structure, processes and challenges faced by the collaborative groups.

Focused on five key areas (organisation, processes, systems & technical, communication & engagement, and community impact), this study highlights key findings, ideas in action and good practice in each section. It is anticipated that the ideas or good practice highlighted may be adopted at either a state or a municipal level.

Key insights include:

- The majority of collaborative models adopt good governance and practices, operating across a range of organisational structures and sizes
- The role of EM in local government has changed over time, and clarity on the roles and responsibilities is needed for a sustainable model in the future
- There is a high correlation between the length of time a Collaboration/MEMEG has existed and the formality of its processes
- In a time when there is increasing communication across the sector, Collaborations/MEMEG would benefit from the State Government adopting a more consistent and co-ordinated engagement approach to improve engagement outcomes
- There is some confusion about the multiplicity of online portals
- Collaborations would benefit from clearer EM training pathways
- Communities benefit from higher levels of consistency in EM service delivery at the municipal level.

# Context

EM Collaborations and partnerships, including Municipal Emergency Management Enhancement Groups (MEMEGs), are regional committees linking councils with their neighbours and emergency management agencies. Collectively, they strengthen EM capability and capacity, by working together to improve individual council's EM outcomes.

Regional MEMEGs, and other Collaborations are represented on a State MEMEG committee.

Councils acknowledge a limited capacity to individually respond to major emergencies for extended periods of time. The development of the Collaborative groups or committees at a municipal level addresses an identified practical need by the local government sector to improve arrangements between councils to support each other and deliver a more consistent, effective and sustainable service response in supporting Victorian communities during major emergencies. Using the limited resources available, councils often work together in planning, response, as well as in relief and recovery activities.

LGV (Local Government Victoria) and the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) have partnered with Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) to undertake a study of municipal collaborative models across the state. This study provides an opportunity to contribute and inform broader EM system reforms under way across Victoria.

EMV provided oversight of the study and was supported by a Project Steering Committee with representatives from LGV, VMIA, MAV and State MEMEG.

# Scope

This study provided the twelve Municipal EM Collaborations across Victoria with an opportunity to inform the local government and EM sectors on how each Collaboration could be better supported and incorporated in the future design of an integrated EM service delivery model for the state.

This study was designed to:

- Develop a shared understanding and appreciation of the various forms of municipal EM collaborative models across the sector, including current opportunities and challenges
- Identify opportunities to enhance the capability and capacity of municipal Collaborations
- Understand what is working well and identify good practice
- Identify the benefit/s of municipal Collaborations to the state, local government and EM sectors.

| The study IS about | The study is NOT about |
|---|---|
| Identifying challenges, needs and opportunities for 12 Municipal EM Collaborations | Reviewing EM Committees other than the 12 identified Collaborations |
| Identifying how the state can better support collaborations | Benchmarking Victorian or interstate Collaborations (beyond the literature review) |
| Recognising how 12 identified Collaborations work with other EM Committees and other stakeholders | Operational deployment of municipal resources |
| Influencing the future design of an integrated EM service delivery model for the state that maximises the effectiveness of municipal EM service delivery | Reviewing existing legislative obligations |
| | Reviewing planning guidelines process |
| | Advising councils on how to collaborate and implement a prescriptive collaborative model |

# Participating Collaborations

| Collaboration | Consultation Format | Consultation details |
|---|---|---|
| State MEMEG | Workshop | Essendon, 28 March 2017 |
| Hume Region MEMEG | Workshop | Benalla, 23 March 2017 |
| South West Region MEMEG | Telephone | 22 March 2017 |
| Central Victoria MEMEG | Telephone | 27 March 2017 |
| Gippsland MEMEG | Workshop | Traralgon, 10 April 2017 |
| Southern Metro Region MEMEG | Telephone | 4 April 2017 |
| Wimmera EM Group | Workshop | Horsham, 30 March 2017 |
| North West Metro Region Collaboration | Workshop | Melton, 1 March 2017 |
| Eastern Metro Emergency Management Partnership | Workshop | Box Hill, 31 March 2017 |
| Northern Victoria Emergency Management Cluster | Workshop | Bendigo,14 February 2017 |
| Murray River Group of Councils | Telephone | 31 March 2017 |
| Grampians MEMEG | Telephone | 20 April 2017 |

## Terminology

For the purposes of the study the term 'Collaboration' and 'collaborative models' are generic terms applied to cater for different names of the municipal EM collaborative models operating in Victoria.

This encompasses the names such as 'cluster', 'group', 'partnership', 'group of councils' and 'MEMEG'.

It is important to note that the way each Collaboration refers to itself (using one of the above terms):

- was self determined by the group
- had limited influence on the scope and success of the group
- may have changed over time as the priorities, outputs and memberships changed.

Most Collaboration members did not raise any concerns regarding the fact that the groups had various names (MEMEG, cluster, etc.) nor was there an expressed appetite to standardise the title of groups.

Refer to *Appendix A: Map of current Collaborations across Victoria* for area map.

# Methodology

## February

### Environment scan

- Analysis of previous reviews and evaluations of collaborative models
- Analysis of strategic and policy documents from local and state government
- Identified gaps and opportunities to inform the consultation stage

## Feb – May

### Consultation with collaborative models

- 6 x Workshops with collaborative groups
- 1 x Workshop with state MEMEG
- 5 x Telephone interviews with chairs of collaborative groups

## May

### Consultation with key stakeholders

- Interview with Craig Lapsley – Emergency Management Commissioner
- Interview with Graeme Emonson – Executive Director Local Government Victoria

## May

### Findings analysis

- Workshop with representatives from all collaborative models, to validate key findings and identify options to address key challenges and opportunities for municipal EM collaboration models

## June

### Learnings Report (this report)

## Consultation approach

A consistent methodology was used to extract key information from the Collaborations, however in some instances the format of the consultation varied to complement the composition, maturity or formality of each Collaboration. A cross-section of groups were consulted in a structured workshop style, while others were consulted via telephone interviews.

### Workshop

While each consultation workshop session was attended by the majority of Collaboration members, each group coordinated attendees including inviting external agency representatives involved in the Collaborations, for example, VicSES, VicPol, and DHHS.

### Telephone

In the interests of resource and time management, telephone interviews were undertaken with the nominated chairs for several collaborative groups. The chair provided key insights on behalf of the Collaboration members, and in most cases the chair had consulted with their Collaboration partners prior to the interview to ensure key input had been obtained.

## Consultation Principles

Cube applied the following principles in all stakeholder engagement:

- Stakeholders were provided with a Study Brief informing them of the study and consultation approach
- Agendas and consultation materials were sent to stakeholders in advance of workshops/interviews/meetings
- Respondents were prompted by the question set, but never 'led' to particular responses
- Discussions focused on identifying issues rather than pre-emptively suggesting solutions
- Respondents were 'kept to scope' to ensure productive discussions.

## Focus Areas

The methodology for consultation had five key focus areas.

They were chosen to provide a consistent and clear approach to understand the Collaboration's operating environments, inputs, outputs, products and community based outcomes.

### Organisation

How the Collaboration is structured, including the participating local government authorities, chair arrangements and use of sub-committees and working groups

### Process

The processes by which the Collaboration achieves its objectives and undertakes it's functions

### Communication & Engagement

The communication, community engagement and stakeholder management activities the Collaboration undertakes, in emergency and non-emergency contexts

### Systems and Technical

The systems and mechanisms in place to support the effective operation of the Collaboration, including training, online systems and portals

### Community Impact

How Collaborations contribute to community outcomes for emergency management

# Focus areas

Within the five focus areas, the following line of questioning was undertaken in the consultation stage to extract key data:

| Focus | Indicators | Themes |
|---|---|---|
| Organisation | Appropriateness and effectiveness of collaboration structures and governance | • What is the governance / authorising environment for the group?<br>• What is the structure of the Collaboration model?<br>• What are the funding arrangements used by the group?<br>• What are the resource sharing arrangements used?<br>• What are the roles and responsibilities of participants? |
| Process | Effectiveness of collaboration processes in place | • What are the formal / informal processes in place?<br>• What is the Collaboration purpose / objectives?<br>• What were the drivers for establishing Collaboration?<br>• How are risks and issues managed?<br>• What are the reporting structures in place?<br>• What processes overlap or are duplicated? |
| Communication & Engagement | Appropriateness and effectiveness of communication and engagement with stakeholders | • What are the informal/formal and internal/external communication activities undertaken?<br>• Does the group use champions and advocates?<br>• What are the linkages with other collaborations/agencies/bodies?<br>• How are relationships managed (formally / informally)?<br>• How is internal / external stakeholder engagement?<br>• How is information sharing managed? |
| System & Technical | Appropriateness and effectiveness of systems and technical solutions | • What systems and technology are used by Collaborations?<br>• How does the group manage the accessibility and sharing of products?<br>• How appropriate and effective are the templates/tools used by the group?<br>• How does the group treat training? |
| Community Impact | Effectiveness of collaborations to improve EM service delivery to the community | • What is the role of the group before an emergency – risk mitigation and resilience building?<br>• What is the role of the group during an emergency – response and relief services?<br>• What is the role of the group after an emergency – impact assessment and recovery? |

# Benefits of collaborative models

Facilitates enhanced coordination of relief and recovery services by local government

Allows agencies to consult and engage across a number of Local Governments – one consistent message

Creates efficiencies

Given limited capacity and resources Collaborative Models share resources, knowledge and support for EM

Advocacy for municipal EM issues

Builds trust and relationships across the sector

Encourages the productive sharing of resources across government

Sharing of best practice

Imparts expertise

Generates ideas

Transfer of knowledge across Local Government

Consistent services and response to emergencies

Lower organisational risk

Innovation

Access to surge capacity if needed



*Source: Terms of reference, insights from consultations and workshop*

# Objectives of collaborative models

As part of the study, consideration was given to the performance of Collaborations against their stated objectives. Collaborative models assemble for a range of reasons, including to:

- Provide or maintain strong networking opportunities
- Provide support to improve efficiencies and reduce duplication of effort
- Share experience and knowledge
- Increase capacity of local government to meet their EM obligations
- Share tools, templates, relief plans and SOGs
- Develop consistent practice and delivery of training
- Share physical resources (which is facilitated by MOUs between local governments)
- Advocate for regional issues
- Provide a formal governance model for project resources.

The study found that in nearly all cases (nine out of twelve) the groups signaled that they had 'met' their objectives. This was based on a self assessment by each Collaborations, and not a detailed audit or analysis of outputs. In the three instances where groups indicated they 'had not' or had 'partially' met their objectives, the groups were in a formative stage or had experienced changes to resourcing/chair and needed further time to re-establish their priorities and strengthen their work.

The Collaborations' ability to realise all intended objectives is not a reflection on the overall effectiveness, rather an indication that there is a genuine commitment and consolidated effort being made by group members to meet their stated objectives over time.

## What makes local government collaboration effective?

There are no definitive design principles that guarantee the effectiveness of a Municipal Collaboration. In terms of good practice objectives, the Australian National University (commissioned by the Sydney Coastal LGAs Group) offers the following in its Emergency Management Planning: Piloting a Health Check for Local Government Report of 2014:

- Emergency management needs to have adequate priority within LGA
- The role of the LGA and a local emergency management officer in all stages of EM needs to be clear
- Emergency management needs to be integrated with all organisational structures and activities
- There is a need to ensure continuity of performance through knowledge transfer among staff
- Key documentation should be readily accessible to all key staff and exist in accessible yet safe electronic back-ups.

# Current practice in Victoria - June 2017

| | State MEMEG | Gippsland MEMEG | Hume MEMEG | South West Regional MEMEG |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objectives**<br>What does the collaboration aim to achieve? | To support and advise local government EM practitioners, builds capability and advocates on behalf of the local government sector on EM matters. | Resource, information sharing and coordination in the Gippsland Region. | Resource, information sharing and coordination in the Hume Region.<br>To discuss changes in EM sector | To support resource-sharing including staff, and buildings for relief centers or machinery to assist with clean-up efforts.<br>Building capacity & knowledge sharing |
| **Inputs**<br>What keeps the collaboration operating? | **Participants:** State-wide committee including councils, regional MEMEGs, DHHS, EMV, LGV, MFB, MAV, Red Cross, Victoria Police and VicSES.<br>Shire of Nilumbik has just assumed the role of chair for the next 12 months<br>MAV provides policy guidance<br>LGV provides administrative support | **Participants:** South Gippsland, Bass Coast, Latrobe, Wellington, Baw Baw, East Gippsland<br>Formal MOUs govern practice<br>There is funding uncertainty into the future | **Participants:** Hume, Wangaratta, Benalla, Mansfield, Wodonga, Towong, Moira, Strathbogie, Mitchell, Murrindindi, Greater Shepparton, Indigo,<br>Formed in December 2012<br>Hume Region is unique for its seasonal variability, and that it has four alpine Resort Management Boards, which also have EM responsibilities<br>Hume Region MEMEG does not receive funding and therefore does not have project staff | **Participants:** Colac Otway, Corangamite and Surf Coast shires have formalised an MOU for collaboration.<br>The MEMEG includes the above councils as well as Warrnambool, Moyne, Glenelg and Southern Grampians, Moorabool, Golden Plains, Queenscliff and Greater Geelong |
| **Outputs**<br>What does the collaboration produce? | Municipal EM Handbook<br>Municipal EM Orientation Kit<br>Inter-council Resource Sharing Protocol<br>MECC Practice Note<br>Annual Forum | Designed and commissioned Standard Operating Procedures which have proven to be effective in Emergency Relief Centres | MEMEG's current project is EM Volunteer, in partnership with Volunteer Victoria, to recruit, train, support, deploy and debrief a workforce of emergency volunteer managers to manage emergency volunteers during disaster recovery and relief | The MOU enables the member councils to request extra resources for emergency relief and recovery services if required<br>EM training modules for staff of all member councils |



*Source: Collaboration reports, Collaborative members input*

# Current practice in Victoria - June 2017

| | Central Victoria MEMEG | Eastern Metro EM Partnership | Southern Metro Region Collaboration | North West Metro Collaboration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objectives**<br>What does the collaboration aim to achieve? | Building and strengthening local relationships, formalising a network in the event of emergencies, building capability and capacity of participating local governments | Advocating for the region, working with others, building capacity, improving common ways of working, strengthening communities. | To be determined | Enhancing our common ways of working, working with others, building capability, building capacity, advocating for the region and community resilience |
| **Inputs**<br>What keeps the collaboration operating? | **Participants:** Macedon Ranges., Hume, Wyndham, Melton Hepburn, Moorabool, Mitchell, and Mount Alexander<br>The group was initially established through funding from the 2011 LG Grants Program, funded by DOJ. The group is administered by the Macedon Ranges Shire Council who provides a small amount of annual funding.<br>Member councils also provide funding when required e.g. exercises.<br>The group is predominantly supported by a MERO. The group has also successfully applied for other grants – Regional Relief Centre Project. | **Participants:** Boroondara, Knox, Monash, Manningham, Maroondah, Nillumbik, Whitehorse, and Yarra Ranges.<br>Model of self-sufficiency, although some of the officers are funded through the MERP.<br>Councils contribute an agreed amount annually in addition to the in-kind contributions. | At the time of writing, Southern Metro Region Collaboration is planning to commence operations in late 2017. | **Participants:** Banyule, Brimbank, Darebin, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moonee Valley, Moreland, Nilumbik, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra City<br>Formal MOU<br>Collaboration Activation Protocol<br>Developed and annually review governance structure and sub groups, piloted over the last two years which has proven to be successful in its operation.<br>Full time regional Support Officer 12 month secondment funded by 14 councils matched funding |
| **Outputs**<br>What does the collaboration produce? | Communication frameworks<br>Relief centre guidelines<br>Annual Exercises<br>MOU's<br>Information Sharing – processes, submissions<br>Networking<br>Guest Speakers i.e. response and recovery agencies or key EM topics | 2014 Strategic Plan outlines six working groups, outcomes and initiatives<br>Training module matrix (compulsory, recommended, optional) and training calendar<br>EM induction.<br>Role specific training packages<br>Common recruitment processes<br>MOUs<br>Regionalised sub-plans | At the time of writing, Southern Metro Region Collaboration is planning to commence operations in late 2017 | Development of training packages and workbooks<br>More than 1,100 staff trained since the collaboration commenced<br>Standardised regional documentation<br>Strategic Plan 2016-2019<br>Regular forums<br>Inter-council resource sharing protocol (MOU) |



*Source: Collaboration reports, Collaborative members input*

# Current practice in Victoria - June 2017

| | Northern Victorian EM Cluster | Murray River Group of Councils | Wimmera Resource Sharing Program | Grampians MEMEG |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objectives**<br>What does the collaboration aim to achieve? | Developing programs, processes and tools to enable shared planning and resourcing.<br>Resource sharing, partnerships, practices and resilience. | Sharing information, networking, enhancing communication and providing support. | Promote, facilitate and advocate for continuous improvement in EM & council's obligations.<br>Oversee implementation of standardised processes. | To better understand diverse issues across municipalities, and improve our processes. |
| **Inputs**<br>What keeps the collaboration operating? | **Participants:** Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander, Loddon, Campaspe, Central Goldfields<br>A Shared Ownership Collaboration.<br>Formation of Project Control Board (CEOs) and Senior Reference Group with Directors from each.<br>councils contribute an agreed amount annually in addition to the in-kind contributions (pro-rata according to population) | **Participants:** Mildura, Swan Hill, Gannawarra, Buloke<br>Links in with Horsham<br>The Murray River Group of councils is wholly self-sufficient and does not rely on any funding from State or Federal Government to sustain its operations.<br>As a result of this, the Collaboration only meets when a need arises. | **Participants:** Horsham, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack.<br>Each of the Partner councils have appointed a MERO, MRM and MFPO. These roles are in addition to the employee's core role and are supported by the Wimmera EM Team (established by the program) which includes a Coordinator and Project Officer.<br>The Wimmera EM Team is funded by LGV – MERP funding and council co-contributions. There is no Commonwealth funding from the NDRG scheme. councils provide monetary or in-kind co-contributions | **Participants:** Moorabool Shire, Ararat, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees (and delegate from Wimmera Project)<br>Committee is un-funded – rather input is based on the goodwill of participating member organisations<br>Current acting chair only 50% funded – part of his normal role |
| **Outputs**<br>What does the collaboration produce? | Integrated Plan<br>SOG<br>Training programs<br>Integrated Committee<br>Cluster Crisis works | As the Murray River Group of Councils is a relatively new collaboration at the time of writing they have not produced any outputs. | The WEMT supports the EM governance of each council and has oversight on the delivery of their outputs in this area<br>Joint training between the four partner councils and other neighbouring councils is actively facilitated by the WEMT as training needs and opportunities are identified<br>Resource Sharing across four councils<br>Planning<br>Capacity and Capability Development<br>Communication and Engagement<br>Agency engagement and relationships | Shared training packages have been developed for consistency<br>Developing a number of task based groups |

*Source: Collaboration reports, Collaborative members input*

# FINDING 1

## The majority of Collaborative models adopt good governance and practices, operating across a range of organisational structures and sizes

### Organisation

| Review theme | Observations | Additional Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Governance | • Across the 12 groups, there was a diverse range of governance models, some more formal than others. For example:<br><br>Several groups meet three - four times per year with Terms of Reference and an agenda of discussion items (minuted)<br><br>One rural Collaboration, which is in the development stage, indicated that the group currently operates in an ad hoc manner with limited capacity to formalise their governance without support<br><br>The largest Collaboration in the study (14 councils) uses a MOU and Collaboration Activation Protocol. They also review their governance structure and sub-groups annually<br><br>One of the most established metro groups has undertaken a strategic planning process to consolidate their objectives, establishing working groups and capability<br><br>• Some of the most notable governance mechanisms included formal operating agreements like a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), documented arrangements for agenda setting, action items and minuting as well as reporting back to CEOs and Councillors. | • The more established collaborative models instil good governance arrangements (produce meeting minutes, have clear outputs and clear reporting channels).<br><br>• Most groups utilise MOUs to formalise outputs and expectations of members.<br><br>• Equally, more established groups indicated they had more formalised and recurrent reporting to Municipal CEOs (via briefing notes, or attendance at regional meetings).<br><br>• While there is recognition that the governance models for Collaborations should remain flexible to their needs and objectives, Collaborations would value direction being provided optimal 'governance standards' they could consider.<br><br>**Emerging Collaborations**<br>What are the foundation characteristics and good governance practices<br><br>**Mature Collaborations**<br>What are the characteristics and good governance practices |
| Structure | • The size and composition of Collaborative models varied greatly, and had no evident link to critical success factors or maturity.<br><br>• The study observed that more mature collaborative models created sub-working groups which focused on specific requirements or provided surge capacity. The focus of the working sub groups ranged from progressing specific strategic areas (such as communication or advocacy), or on the delivery of specific project components (such as training exercises, or standard operating procedures). | • There are opportunities to enhance the sharing of good practice ideas generated from working groups.<br><br>• This may include State MEMEG taking a more active role in supporting project delivery in areas of strategic importance i.e. training, communication or advocacy projects.<br><br>• Depending on the strategic objectives of the Collaboration, many found that a dedicated working group for advocacy helped to better articulate regional/location based issues and represent them at other forums, for example, State MEMEG, regional planning groups. |

# FINDING 1

## The majority of Collaborative models adopt good governance and practices, operating across a range of organisational structures and sizes

### Ideas in action

- **State MEMEG could provide a forum** (an annual event, or standing agenda item at meetings) for collaborative models to share **'good practice' governance practices** as this will assist groups who are still developing their internal organisational processes.
- There is an opportunity to **create 'governance standards'** – a baseline for governance practices which would best support Collaborative models.
- Some Collaborative models may benefit from adopting a **consistent approach in how they demonstrate and communicate their achievements** and benefits of the group. This may include newsletter templates, or sending articles to MAV, for example, for profiling in their newsletter. This would assist to build support from stakeholders (including local agencies, local government CEOs, other parts of local government, other stakeholders).
- Many of the regional and rural Collaboration members acknowledged that distance is a significant and timely barrier to their involvement. Consideration may be given to **test new technological practices** (teleconference, Skype) to better support participation and organisation. Equally there are a number of **low cost technology platforms available which may also better support co-ordination** and communication within Collaborations (interactive internet communication platforms such as 'Yammer').

### Insights from Collaboration Workshops / Interviews

*"We have learnt how to work better together but it has taken time."*

*"We needed time to improve our work products. We now have a consistent approach to SOG and training guidelines."*

### Good practice example

The **North West Metro Region Collaboration** have a well documented approach to MOU development and sign off. This also extends to meeting management processes to ensure all members have the opportunity to contribute and agenda items are provided equitable discussion time. It benefited by having dedicated resources to support governance activities and project delivery.

# FINDING 2

## The role of Emergency Management in Local Government has changed over time, and clarity on the roles and responsibilities is needed for a sustainable model in the future

### Organisation

| Review theme | Observations | Additional Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Role of Local Government in EM | • The role of EM within local government has shifted over the last 10 years. It was noted on many occasions during the consultation stage, that the community and Federal/State Government's expectations relating to local government's role in EM has evolved.<br>• Many groups indicated that sources of funding was initially available to support the establishment of the Collaborations.<br>• In most instances this funding has now ceased, and Collaborations have made alternative funding arrangements through the pooling of funds (identified in larger Collaborative groups) or through the contribution of 'good-will' – with participants allocating their time/resources as part of their EM roles (identified in the majority of cases).<br>• In some instances reduced funding has meant the group has had to 'de-scope' their efforts as a dedicated resource is no longer available to drive project deliverables and co-ordination (e.g. large scale training exercises).<br>• Regardless of the ways in which Collaborations interact with their respective CEOs, almost all reported high levels of engagement and support from municipal executives.<br>• While a majority of the Collaborations were positive about the impact they were making, several indicated that the uncertainty of a sustainable model is a risk to their future operation and outputs. | • The study indicated a general consensus that the roles, responsibilities and relationships between State MEMEG, MAV, LGV and EMV require clarification.<br>• There are a number of related committees in the EM and local government sectors. The study noted that it is important that the role of the Collaboration is seen to complement (and not duplicate) existing forums / roles and responsibilities e.g. regional planning committees, State MEMEG, councils.<br>• The study also identified that further support is needed at the state level to engage CEOs and Councillors on the importance of EM (and to include local government practitioners in the discussion). This may include lifting the profile and benefits of being a member of a collaborative model.<br>• A number of groups identified funding uncertainty as having an impact on confidence and outputs for the Collaboration. There are opportunities to review alternative sustainable models to better enable administration and project delivery for Collaborations. |
| State MEMEG | • There are mixed views of the functionality and success of State MEMEG.<br>• Some participants have more experience in how and when to engage with State MEMEG – e.g. can depend on existing relationships.<br>• The consultation indicated that engagement with State MEMEG can be challenging for new participants to the sector. | • There was a strong view that there is an opportunity to review and refocus State MEMEG to better respond to challenges and opportunities faced by local government in EM. By improving role clarity and strengthening the focus on local government priorities, State MEMEG should improve the links between Municipal Collaborations to the State MEMEG, and improve delivery at a state level. Some groups expressed the view that at the moment State MEMEG is quite task focused. |

FINDING 2

# The role of Emergency Management in Local Government has changed over time, and clarity on the roles and responsibilities is needed for a sustainable model in the future

## Ideas in action

- The roles, responsibilities and relationships between State MEMEG, MAV, LGV and EMV should be clarified at a state level and communicated consistently to all stakeholders.
- It is important that **engagement continues with CEOs and Councillors** to build greater understanding and buy-in for emergency management at senior levels and includes local government EM practitioners.
- This is a timely opportunity for groups to **clarify and test the expectations of stakeholders** (agencies, State Government, local government, members) for each Municipal Collaboration (clarify what they want out of Collaborations/MEMEGs).
- In the context of significant reform in the local government and EM sectors, the role of Collaborations could be better **recognised and supported in business continuity planning, municipal EM planning and policy development.**
- It is important to **clarify the role and strengthen the capacity for State MEMEG** to better support delivery of innovative solutions. This may include improving the sharing of best practice across the state, improving co-ordination at a state level (e.g. training requirements), developing guidelines and minimum standards for key documents used by collaborative models.

## Insights from Collaboration Workshops / Interviews

*"We are doing well but we need more horse power to take things further."*

*"MEMEG has been created to fill the void – LGV has a very different focus."*

*"CEOs are an important link from the partnership to MAV and Government."*

## Good practice example

It was reported that the CEOs and Mayors in Gippsland understand and respect the role of the MEMEG and seek its advice on issues. EMV and LGV recently engaged the CEOs to discuss EM and there are further opportunities to build on this engagement through the Collaborations (as subject matter experts).

# FINDING 3

## There is a high correlation between the length of time a Collaboration has existed and the formality of its processes

### Process

| Review theme | Observations | Additional Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Types of processes | • The study found that many of the longer running Collaborations have more formalised and sophisticated co-ordination and governance practices.<br>• Member co-ordination, for example, is one common process with varying degrees of formality across the collaborative models. More mature Collaborations tend to have more sophisticated methods for co-ordinating their members and meetings, such as chairing protocols, action items and out-of-session document and information sharing processes.<br>• Most Collaborations use the group to share tools and templates with varying degrees of formalisation and have evolved over time from developing standardise operational guidelines, to broader outputs (training or communication). | • There was a strong view that the Collaboration groups are invaluable in sharing knowledge and expertise across local government.<br>• A formal induction process for new members to groups is regarded as good practice to ensure all participants are clear on the processes and channels they can use to raise issues.<br>• In all groups consulted, the relationships and connections made through the Collaborations are pivotal in supporting the activation of clear processes used in the event of emergencies.<br>• In metropolitan contexts, formal processes relating to an emergency are utilised by the Collaboration in critical events. |
| Standardising processes | • The study observed a strong view that more could be done to share and standardise templates (operational protocols/procedures) to enhance consistency and create efficiency.<br>• The perceived benefits of formalising processes and sharing standardised tools include:<br>  • Creates efficiencies, and avoids duplicating effort<br>  • Allows for regional consistency (with flexibility for tailoring for localised issues)<br>  • Shares knowledge, different insights and experience.<br>• In a small number of cases, Collaborations share templates and standardised documents with other collaborative groups (which are in the similar proximity or have the same level of maturity). The success of this currently relies on pre-existing relationships of participants.<br>• In terms of the administrative processes, those used by the MEMEGs/Collaborations were relatively informal (email or telephone) and depended on the capacity and capability of participants. | • Participants acknowledged that more could be done at a state level to adopt a consistent approach to processes and practices. This includes developing minimum standards and guidelines for key documents (for example MSIAs, SOGs) creating efficiencies and consistency. The templates could then be adapted by collaborative models and local government to meet local/regional requirements.<br>• While most were aware of a portal/online platform (EM Cop) where documents can be shared, most respondents indicated that they do not actively use the platform to share templates. |

FINDING 3

# There is a high correlation between the length of time a Collaboration has existed and the formality of its processes

## Ideas in action

While acknowledging the autonomy and localised needs of collaborative groups, consideration may be given to **developing a baseline or principles-based approach for key documents or templates** (MSIA, SOP, SOG) to improve consistency and reduce duplication of effort.

Standard templates could also be supported by the **sharing of good practice examples** (and an explanation of what 'good practice' is in the context of collaborative models) to increase awareness and capability on what people are doing, and how it can be shared and adapted to meet local needs.

Following an event, a review of lessons learnt is always valuable. Consideration could be given to improving the **capture and sharing of lessons learnt** through existing audits processes relating to EM planning.

A formal induction process for new members to the Collaborative groups is seen as a valuable process. This may involve new members meeting with the chair, clarifying roles, expectations and protocols, such as, how best to engage with State MEMEG.

## Insights from Collaboration Workshops / Interviews

*"As a Committee we are continually reviewing and improving our documentation."*

*"Sharing of training tool - if someone develops material they email to group – may not be good practice but good to share."*

## Good practice example

**Eastern Metro Councils Emergency Management Partnership** has a formal process for 'induction' of new members. This involves the chair providing each new member with an introductory meeting on the collaboration operating model, current issues and unique operating challenges. This is reported to lead to stronger member engagement, better knowledge transfer and positive long term collaboration outcomes.

# FINDING 4

## In a time when there is increasing communication across the sector, Collaborations would benefit from a more consistent and co-ordinated engagement approach to improve outcomes

### Communication & Engagement

| Review theme | Observations | Additional Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Consultation and Engagement | • The pace of change in EM and local government sectors is rapid. The study found that in some instances this pace is not adequately explained or supported at a local level. In this context, there are new policy statements, discussion papers and other strategies requiring engagement and consultation.<br>• Most Collaborations indicated that they regularly use the meeting time to discuss current issues and policy changes underway in the EM sector.<br>• Many groups also use the forum to prepare a shared response, or test each other's thinking and contributions (if providing individual responses).<br>• In this context, many Collaborations indicated that there is a significantly high volume of requests for advice and consultation from their stakeholders and agencies. While they all agree that it is vital that local government contributes to policy reforms, the lack of co-ordination, duplication and inefficiencies in the management of consultation process creates frustration, fatigue and in some instance, a belief that the consultation process is not authentic.<br>• Equally, consultation participants indicated that in some instances the language in broader policy papers and strategic documents often don't resonate with the operational and practical nature of many roles within local government. | • The study identified a common view that Collaborations should be recognised as a pivotal forum to test and consult policy and strategic changes in the local government and EM sectors. This acknowledges local government's close link to the community and role in relief and recovery.<br>• Equally, improvements can be made to provide local government with greater visibility of a pipeline of initiatives (consultation, policy implementation) that may impact local government so they can plan accordingly.<br>• Given that EM is often a part time role for local government representatives, forward planning in terms of consultation and engagement will allow staff to make arrangements to best respond (e.g. change leave arrangements, arrange Collaborations to meet). |
| Communication | • Collaboration members indicated that there is a lack of co-ordination of communication activities in the sector (duplication, lack of structure) and as a result, people opt out or tune out, particularly where EM is a minor part of their role. | • There are opportunities for the Victorian Government and agencies to enhance the co-ordination and delivery of messaging and communication to the Collaborations and local government to ensure it is targeted and relevant to the audience. |

# FINDING 4

## In a time when there is increasing communication across the sector, Collaborations would benefit from a more consistent and co-ordinated engagement approach to improve outcomes

### Ideas in action

There was strong support for the development of an **'Engagement Charter'** that provides guidance on how to consult with local government and Collaborations – with standard timeframes relevant to local government (lead times for briefing CEO, Councillors, reporting cycles).

Consideration may be given to creating a **new Collaborative Committee** (involving EMV, LGV, DHHS, MAV, State MEMEG) which could meet every 6 months to review and consider upcoming consultation. The group could then communicate the proposed pipeline of consultation and engagement.

A common theme arising throughout the review was the appetite to share good practice and lessons learnt. **Communication platforms such as YouTube or Facebook may offer an interesting and innovative way in which to share information between Collaboration members** across regions and at a state level to share their insights and views in a dynamic environment.

Examples include YouTube videos, closed Facebook groups for discussion or raising questions, or sharing documents or discussion in Slack or Yammer portals.

Internet forums may also support greater participation for those members who have to travel significant distances to attend meetings or forums.

### Insights from Collaboration Workshops / Interviews

*"Some people in local government are overwhelmed by EM information."*

*"We use the broader EM network to email questions (across Victoria) – don't limit network to region."*

### Good practice example

**Northern West Metro Collaboration** has established a shared calendar to enable a more efficient and co-ordinated approach to engagement. The shared calendar ensures the Collaboration is appropriately engaged and Collaboration members are not attending meetings on the same day.

# FINDING 5

## There is some confusion about the multiplicity of online portals

### System & Technical

| Review theme | Observations | Additional Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Portals and Systems | • As there are several different online EM sector portals prescribed for municipal use, there is some confusion about the purpose and applicability of each.<br>• A number of Collaborations reported that their members do not actively use the portal provided by EMV because it was a state-wide portal, and did not allow them to cater for their local needs – For example Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (EM Cop) could allow for Collaborations to add documents.<br>• Some Collaborations reported that their own systems (email, informal) are more familiar, and are actively used by Collaboration members.<br>• Groups also felt that the existing platforms and portals currently don't consider the user experience in their design and useability (for example – they are not relevant to the work of local government, duplicate effort, and are difficult to navigate). | • The study identified that groups would benefit from an integrated EM portal for local government. This could be a 'one stop shop' for documents, sharing best practice templates, SOG and SOPs.<br>• Adopting a standardised portal may assist other agencies and local government to have 'one source of truth' and live access to information and data (for example - it could assist DHHS accessing reports and data readily available within the portal).<br>• A standardised portal may also assist 'lifting' the functionality of the emerging collaborative models as they will have better access to documents and information. |

### Ideas in action

When developing an integrated platform as described above, it is important to engage (early) a cross section of Collaboration members (a focus group) to test and refine the accessibility and relevance of the system for their business needs.

Consideration must also be given to how the agencies use these platforms, as it should allow accessibility of data from agencies (VicPol, DHHS, VicSES, CFA, MFB) to better support the contribution of local government and collaborative members.

### Insights from Collaboration Workshops / Interviews

*"Password overload is common for our members!"*

*"We need one place for our plans and MEMEG documents."*

### Good practice example

The study highlighted a consistent preference for the state to develop an integrated EM system as a single point of access to key information and resources. Nonetheless, in the interim, local solutions are being developed. For example – the **Northern Victorian Cluster** has activated a shared contact database for use across the region. The group is also piloting an integrated Crisis Works program.

# FINDING 6

## Collaborations would benefit from clearer EM training pathways

### System & Technical

| Review theme | Observations | Additional Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Training | • Currently there is a diverse range of training options provided by CFA, SES, DHHS, Volunteer Victoria – "too much training". Some participants felt the training provided sometimes is not best suited or does not specifically relate to local government needs.<br>• It was suggested that the sector may benefit from an EM training framework, which includes a matrix and analysis of all the training available, pre-requisites, competencies attained, relevance to local government, requirements for roles in local government (for example MERO).<br>• While the Collaborations acknowledged opportunities to improve co-ordination and information sharing a state level, there was a clear preference for training to be tailored and delivered at local government to meet their specific requirements. | • There is an opportunity at a state level to better support new EM staff by identifying learning and development pathways and training options most relevant for local government (including online, Train the Trainer programs).<br>• There is also an opportunity to analyse and map key competencies for roles such as MERO against the available training. Such a project may consider the prerequisites, courses, consistency and linkage for local government in emergency management.<br>• To complement this work, collaborative models may also consider developing position descriptions which articulate the baseline training requirements and competencies to participate in EM events in that region. |

### Ideas in action

- The development of a consolidated view of training options is needed at a state level. This includes a standardised training matrix across all Collaborations. This could better support implementation locally (sharing of intelligence).
- Once there is enhanced awareness of what training is being delivered across the State, consideration may also be given to improve regional links to join training activities.
- As part of an integrated view of training, improvements can be made to share insights from de-briefing after an event (as this knowledge could support skills development across Collaborations).
- Identifying development pathways and training options most relevant for local government.

### Insights from Collaboration Workshops / Interviews

*"There is so much training available, how do we know what to choose?"*

*"Training for local government should be developed by local government."*

### Good practice example

**State MEMEG** reported that it has done some preliminary work gathering the pre-requisites, costs and key beneficiaries for training packages provided in Victoria. However, this study has observed that the training environment is dynamic, which means a resource like this needs to be maintained regularly. This resource should also be accessible to all Collaborations.

# FINDING 7

## Communities benefit from higher levels of consistency in EM service delivery

### Community Impact

| Review theme | Observations | Additional Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Community impact | • Consistency of municipal service delivery is a common objective.<br>• Communities desire and expect a consistent service offerings on par with neighbouring communities, regardless of which local government authority is delivering the service.<br>• Incidents like Wye River Fires have raised community expectations, and set a precedent for how agencies and council will respond. The sector must therefore clarify roles and responsibilities into the future.<br>• The benefit of the Collaborative model is that services for the community are more consistent as working collaboratively across boundaries – "We are more informed about we can do". | • Communities benefit indirectly from an effective Collaborative model as it facilitates greater consistency and transfer of EM knowledge across local government boundaries.<br>• As community expectations change, it is important that the community can distinguish between what council delivers and what state and agencies do to support them.<br>• It is equally important that communities are aware of actions they can safely take (to be less reliant on local and the Victorian Government) and build community resilience.<br>• Collaboration members acknowledged that there is scope to better integrate EM with the broader work of local government, particularly community engagement and resilience. |

### Ideas in action

EM must be acknowledged as business as usual (BAU) for local government (e.g. policy, regional plans, response agencies). By improving the standardisation of EM through the Collaborations, local government is better placed to then focus on building community resilience.

By continuing to build the capacity of Collaborations to share stories about EM incidents and lessons learned then communities will benefit from improved outcomes.

To improve consistency and reduce duplication of effort, a principles based approach for Impact Assessments could benefit the community.

### Insights from Collaboration Workshops / Interviews

*"Every community member deserves the same EM response even if they are in a smaller municipality."*

*"EM is increasingly focusing on community resilience. MEMEGs will play an important role in the future ."*

### Good practice example

The municipalities of the **Gippsland MEMEG** have very different risk profiles, however are able to deliver similar, or at least comparable EM services to all communities (e.g. relief centres). Collaboration members reported that communities benefit from consistency as they can "know what to expect" during and after emergency events.

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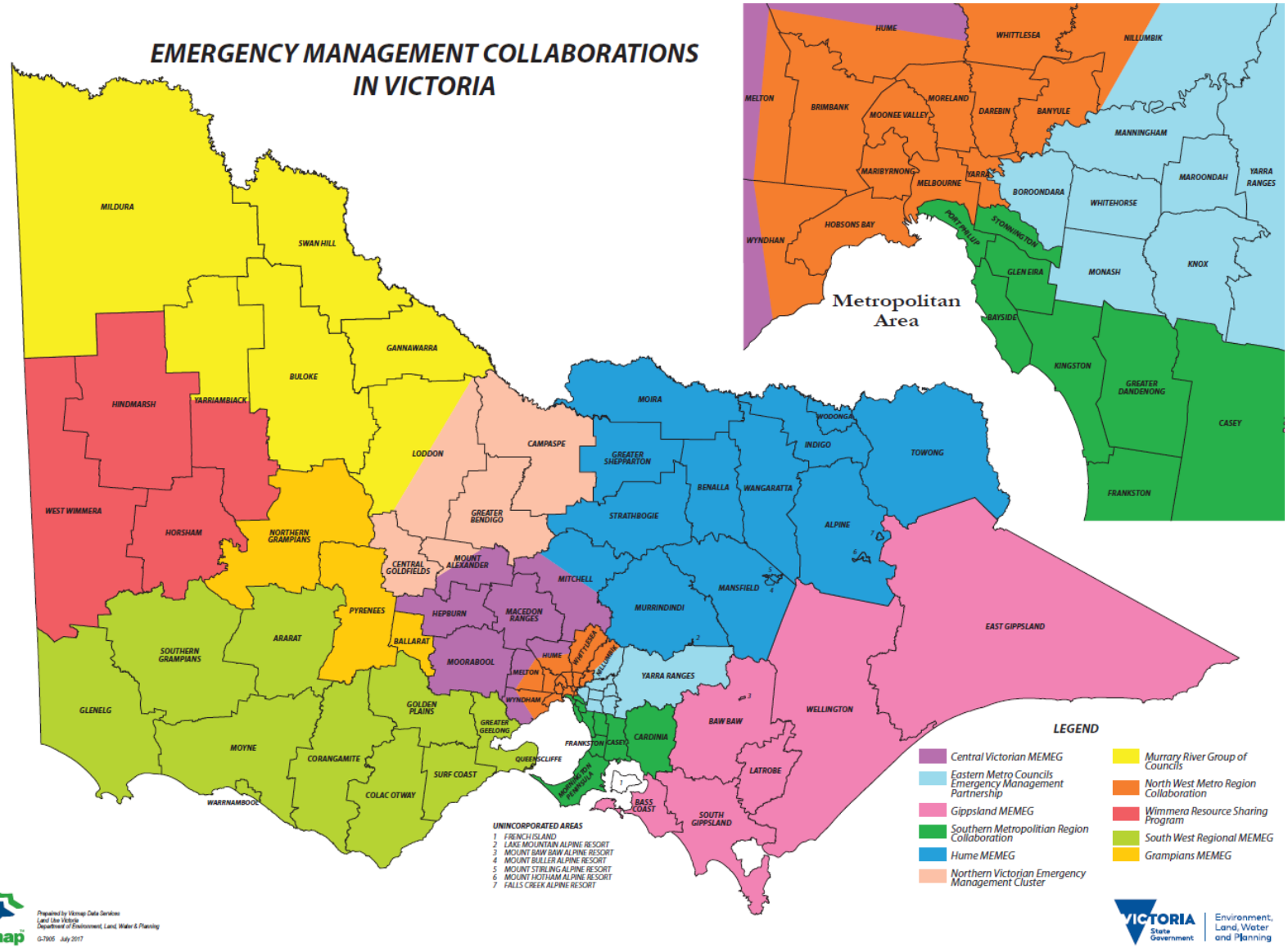
# Appendix A: Map of current Collaborations across Victoria




*Source: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning*