

|  |
| --- |
| Vulnerable Persons Registers EvaluationSummary of key findings and next stepsDepartment of Health and Human ServicesJanuary 2020 |
|  |

Department of Health

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 03 9096 0904, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email empolicy@dhhs.vic.gov.au

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

© State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services January 2020.

Contents

[Introduction 4](#_Toc33185789)

[Policy context 4](#_Toc33185790)

[Environmental context 5](#_Toc33185791)

[Evaluation and key findings 5](#_Toc33185792)

[Next steps 6](#_Toc33185793)

[Appendix 1 - Vulnerable Persons Registers Summary of key findings 8](#_Toc33185794)

[Purpose 8](#_Toc33185795)

[Key stakeholders 8](#_Toc33185796)

[Methodology 8](#_Toc33185797)

[Limitations 9](#_Toc33185798)

[Key findings 9](#_Toc33185799)

[Conclusion 15](#_Toc33185800)

# Introduction

The Department of Health and Human Services (department) assists Victorians to act to protect their safety and wellbeing in emergencies, particularly those who face greater risk.

The *Vulnerable People in Emergencies* policy is a key component of the department’s broader work program to assist Victorians to act to protect their safety and wellbeing in emergencies. The policy supports people who are at greatest risk to prepare for and respond to emergencies, and incudes the administration of Vulnerable Persons Registers for those who require targeted support to evacuate in an emergency.

A review of the policy commenced in 2017 with the circulation of a discussion paper to identify gaps and evolving challenges in the policy framework, and to seek contemporary solutions. The discussion paper received over 40 submissions from the emergency management and community services sectors. The responses highlighted that a more extensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the register as a tool to support local emergency management planning and response was required.

The evaluation of the registers was undertaken by the department’s Centre for Evaluation and Research between May 2019 and August 2019. The evaluation sought to measure the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of the registers as a tool to support local emergency management planning. It looked at how the registers are used, the confidence in accuracy, understanding of roles and responsibilities, and the impact environmental factors are having on implementation. This was achieved through analysis of system data, surveys to council and community service organisations coordinators, and stakeholder interviews and workshops.

This document summarises the key findings of the evaluation of the registers. It also outlines how the department will use feedback from the discussion paper and the evaluation findings to guide improvement across sectors to support people at greatest risk during emergencies.

# Policy context

The department introduced the *Vulnerable People in Emergencies* policy (policy) in 2012 on behalf of the State Government to assist councils to respond the *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission final report*. The Vulnerable Persons Registers (registers) component of the policy was developed to address Recommendation 3(c) of the Royal Commission’s report, which recommended councils in respect to bushfires, should:

*Compile and maintain a list of vulnerable residents who need tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate and provide this list to local police and anyone else with pre-arranged responsibility for helping vulnerable residents evacuate.*

The policy scope was expanded in 2015 in response to Recommendation 67 of the *2010-11 Review of the Victorian Floods Warnings and Response*, which recommended the policy be applicable across all hazards.

Registers operate in the 64 councils located in Country Fire Authority districts across Victoria and are used to maintain a list of community members who need targeted advice or support to evacuate their homes in an emergency. Councils are funded through their Municipal Emergency Resource Program to provide system administration and local oversight of their register. The department’s funded agencies (including council programs where relevant) are required to support emergency planning with their clients and enter and maintain information on registers for clients who consent and meet the register’s access criteria. The aim of the registers is to ensure reliable information about community members at greatest risk during emergencies is available to Victoria Police for evacuation planning. The registers can also support emergency planning activities of local councils.

# Environmental context

**Emergency management reform in Victoria**

Since the Royal Commission’s final report in 2011, emergency management in Victoria has become increasingly community centred with a strong focus on developing community resilience. There has been significant change to emergency advice provided to communities, including fire danger information and warnings, and safety and shelter options. The emergency management sector has implemented new initiatives and expanded programs in community education and engagement to support improved community preparedness and safer responses. These initiatives and programs across the emergency management sector promote a shared approach for community safety in the event of an emergency.

Notably, Victoria’s community safety strategy for bushfires has moved from ‘stay or go’ to ‘leave early’. This strategy increases the safety of families with young children, older people, and people with disability by promoting and supporting early relocation before an emergency or potential emergency occurs.

**Disability and Aged Care services reform**

The funding shift of home-based aged care and disability services, from the State to Commonwealth Government, considerably reduces the effectiveness of the policy’s preparedness approach and pathway to registers through the department’s funded agencies. This, together with greater choice and control of the types of services available to people through this reform, impacts on the visibility of service providers and their understanding of the purpose and use of registers to support clients at greatest risk in emergencies.

# Evaluation and key findings

The points below provide a short summary of the key findings from the evaluation. A comprehensive summary of the evaluation findings is at **Appendix 1**.

* Victoria Police draw upon a combination of information sources for evacuation planning, including geospatial information and local emergency plans. Information held in registers is most often used where there is lead time for evacuation planning, to prioritise assistance to people in resource constrained emergency response settings. However, the use of information held in registers by Victoria Police has markedly declined over the past five years. While some councils reported registers were referred to by Victoria Police in all emergencies, others reported they were not used at all.
* Accuracy of information in the registers was reported as mostly adequate. However, information had been found to be incorrect in some instances during emergency response operations. Issues associated with eligibility assessment, client records becoming unattached from service providers, incomplete client record revalidation processes and consent procedures were found to significantly reduce confidence in the accuracy of information held on registers.
* The understanding of roles and responsibilities under the policy in implementing registers is varied. A majority of community service organisations (72 per cent) had a moderate or lesser understanding of their role, in contrast to councils reporting a strong understanding of their role (74 per cent). Capability gaps and implementation issues are attributed to a high staff turnover across the sectors and the absence of consistent training and guidance materials. The role of Australian Red Cross has been considerably underutilised for emergency planning support for clients that are not attached to a service provider.
* The intent and purpose of registers to support emergency evacuation planning is misaligned with contemporary emergency management practice to prepare and leave early before an imminent emergency. There is a perception that registers build dependency on emergency services personnel, and that assistance for individuals on a register to evacuate during an emergency is guaranteed. On the contrary, there are incidences where a person listed on the register has been able to leave their home early in an emergency, however there is no formal method to inform Victoria Police that this has occurred and be factored into evacuation planning.
* A continued reliance on service delivery as the gateway to inclusion on the registers for people at greatest risk is likely to further impact the integrity of information held on registers. This is attributed to the significant changes in service delivery from directly funding services to funding individuals to engage a range of services based on choice. Moving supports from one service provider to another is likely to result in an increase in the number of client records that are unverified or unattached to a service provider.

# Next steps

While the evaluation findings demonstrate limitations of registers in system design and implementation, there is strong acknowledgement from the sectors, through the responses to the discussion paper and the evaluation, of the need for a more contemporary approach in Victoria to support people who face greater risk in emergencies.

Contemporary approaches to community preparedness and resilience in emergencies require strong connections at the local level between people and the services, systems and structures that support the community to function. These approaches recognise that communities have varying strengths, challenges and emergency risks.

While promoting and supporting community and individual resilience to emergencies is crucial, the department acknowledges that building resilience may take time and people who face the greatest risk in emergencies must be supported at all points in the shift of approaches.

With consideration to this, the department will undertake a two-stage approach to strengthen the current policy, while leading the development of a shared approach to support emergency preparedness for those at greatest risk in emergencies.

**First stage – policy refresh**

The first stage will focus on working with the emergency management and community services sector to improve the integrity of information held on registers. This work commenced in November 2019 and will be completed in March 2020, ahead of the April 2020 register revalidation process. This stage will include:

* Updating the *Vulnerable People in Emergencies* policy. This update will include changes to the language used to describe people at greatest risk in emergencies and more clearly outline the roles and responsibilities for those who use the policy and guidelines.
* Update the program guidelines and create additional guidance to support system processes and screening of individuals for inclusion on registers. This guidance will be promoted to raise awareness amongst agencies which are not funded by the department of the purpose of registers and how they can assist clients at greatest risk in emergencies.
* Reduce the number of individuals listed on a register whose records are unvalidated, unattached or suspended for extended periods of time. This includes working with the Australian Red Cross and councils to contact these individuals to update their records and offer emergency planning assistance.
* Investigate and implement measures to increase the rate of consent forms loaded on client records.

**Second stage – Emergency management sector framework for those at greatest risk**

The department recognises that building emergency resilience for people at greatest risk in emergencies requires a shared approach. The second stage involves developing a framework to align emergency risk mitigation and planning outcomes for people at greatest risk during emergencies with contemporary emergency management practice.

The department will work closely with other departments, the emergency management and community services sectors, and other key stakeholders to develop the framework. The framework can then be integrated into all areas which intersect with emergency management for those at greatest risk.

The current emergency management planning reform agenda at the State, regional and municipal levels is an opportunity to promote a shared approach amongst communities, agencies and councils.

The department will also draw on research and best practice from other jurisdictions, and will bring together tools, resources, and strategies to support planning and responses for those at greatest risk during emergencies.

Development of the framework has commenced and is estimated to be completed in April 2020. Consultation of the draft framework will be provided through the State Crisis and Resilience Council governance structure.

# Appendix 1 - Vulnerable Persons Registers Summary of key findings

## Purpose

The department’s Centre for Evaluation and Research conducted the evaluation of the vulnerable persons registers (registers) from May to August 2019. The evaluation aimed to understand the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of the registers as a mechanism to support local emergency management planning and response activities. The evaluation findings will inform future policy reform to increase the emergency preparedness and safety of community members who face the greatest risk in emergencies.

## Key stakeholders

The evaluation captured views and experiences from stakeholders that have a role through the *Vulnerable People in Emergencies* policy in administering the registers. These stakeholders and a summary of their role in the policy is outlined below.

**Community service organisations (CSOs)**

The department’s funded agencies are required to:

* screen their clients against access criteria for inclusion on a register
* obtain informed consent from clients for their information to be held on a register
* enter and maintain information about their clients on registers.

Non-department funded agencies can also screen and add individuals to a register.

**Councils**

Councils in 64 municipalities coordinate a register by providing local oversight and system administration. This role is funded through the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program. Councils may also utilise the register to support emergency planning activities.

**Australian Red Cross**

The department funds the Australian Red Cross to provide emergency planning support for people who are not attached to a CSO and need support to develop an emergency plan. Councils may engage the Australian Red Cross to undertake this activity when a community member who meets these circumstances is identified. Where emergency plans are unable to be put in place, the Australian Red Cross may refer people back to the council for screening and inclusion on its register.

**Victoria Police**

Registers are cloud-based and directly accessible to authorised representatives from Victoria Police to aid emergency evacuation planning and response, including exercising and potential evacuation.

## Methodology

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the evaluation. The quantitative methods included the analysis of statistical and administrative data, and documentation including:

* A workforce survey to all council register coordinators
* A CSO survey to all active coordinators / users (distribution list sourced from Datalink to verify unvalidated agencies)
* Crisisworks data (sourced from Datalink).

The qualitative methods involved 21 stakeholder interviews about experience and behaviours related to the policy including:

* Targeted face to face and telephone stakeholder interviews with Victoria Police, implementing councils, CSO agencies, Datalink, Australian Red Cross, Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the department’s Operations Divisions, among others.
* An evaluation workshop was held in July 2019 to validate initial findings with an emergency management collaborative involving four councils, Victoria Police and departmental emergency management staff.

## Limitations

The response rates to the council and CSO surveys were reasonable with a 17 per cent CSO response (74 of 430 agencies) and 30 per cent response for councils (19 of 64 councils). A large proportion of interviews focussed on these groups, with councils in particular.

Councils not included under the policy (municipalities zoned to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade exclusively) and Emergency Management Victoria were also not engaged as part of data collection.

## Key findings

### Victoria Police use of registers for evacuation planning

1. **The value of registers in prioritising in planning of evacuations**

Victoria Police use the registers as an evacuation planning support tool to prioritise assistance to the most vulnerable. Information from registers aids Victoria Police to consider the needs of registered people when undertaking evacuation planning in resource constrained emergency response settings.

Survey and interview responses indicate situations where a register has been used but information held on the register has been difficult to act on. These included situations where people had been visited but were too distressed to be relocated, or where it has been difficult to identify an appropriate place to relocate a person where a relief centre may not be appropriate to their needs. Agencies raised concern about situations where specialised equipment to transport a person may also not be available. This points to the importance of the pre-emergency planning component of the policy.

The registers are one of many information sources drawn upon for evacuation planning such as geospatial information or local emergency plans. However, their unique value is that they contain information about people identified as vulnerable living in private dwellings (mostly on their own). Information accuracy is reported as mostly adequate but has been found to be incorrect in some instances during emergency response operations.

1. **The use of registers for evacuation planning**

The extent to which the registers are used for evacuations is driven by circumstance, with the registers most often used in emergencies where there has been sufficient lead time for evacuation planning (see Table 1). In situations such as a fast running grass fire or bushfire, there often is not enough time for a planned evacuation and an evacuation management team may not be established. As evacuation planning is the trigger for Victoria Police to access information held on the registers, they are often not used unless an evacuation management team is in place.

**Table 1. 2015 Wye River Fire case study example**

Registers in relevant council areas were used effectively during the December 2015 Wye River fire. For this fire, it was known an evacuation was likely three to four days ahead of time. In this instance registers were well integrated into the risk and consequence planning of the multi-agency Incident Management Team. Having time to do pre-planning, the team used information held on registers to identify and contact people ahead of the risk in the areas likely to be in the path of the fire if it were to run (Kennett River and Wye River).

As a result of the team’s early actions, short term respite and accommodation was organised for those people on a register in the affected area. This also enabled Victoria Police to maintain awareness of the location of the people who were evacuated during the duration of the emergency. In this case, the people on a register were contacted prior to Christmas day and became the top priority for the Christmas day evacuations.

1. **Inconsistency and decline in the use of registers**

Interview and survey responses indicated that the registers are not being used consistently. Survey responses showed variability in the use of registers across municipalities, with some councils reporting that their register was referred to in all emergencies and others reporting that it was not used at all. The majority of responses answered that they were aware of registers being used in emergencies ‘some of the time’ (42 per cent).

The use of registers as an information source for evacuation planning has been integrated into official evacuation procedures, such as Victoria Police’s evacuation check list. However, it was reported that turnover of Victoria Police staff at the local level, and the timeliness of evacuation planning training, contribute to the degree that registers are being used .

Figure 1 displays Datalink record data from the Crisisworks platform that hosts the registers. This shows the number of times evacuation reports were generated in the system, which is an indicator of each time Victoria Police has referred to a register for evacuation planning or training. The red line is the closest indication of the use of registers for evacuation planning in emergencies (although this may include some instances of training). The use of the registers’ platform peaks in 2014 and declines over time.

Figure 1: Number of Crisisworks evacuation reports generated by Victoria Police

### Emergency planning support for vulnerable people

1. **The effectiveness of registers as a tool to support emergency management planning**

The majority of councils (79 per cent) stated the registers had supported their ability to undertake local emergency planning to meet the needs of vulnerable people to ‘some extent’. Interview and survey responses suggest the use of registers as a planning tool across councils was variable and limited. The underutilisation of the registers for local emergency planning is linked to varied perceptions of roles, resourcing levels, as well as the use of alternative practices by many councils for similar purposes. Perceptions that the registers are viewed primarily as a response tool used by Victoria Police, rather than a tool to be used in preparedness or planning phases by councils or CSOs were highlighted in interview and survey responses.

Most respondents agreed on the usefulness of registers within the response phase to the extent that they quickly provide accessible information about the likely location vulnerable people. However, respondents also expressed that this did not necessarily extend to supporting planning for how someone would or could be evacuated prior to an emergency.

Councils responding to the survey were asked about the use of the registers before, during and after emergencies. Compared with 89 per cent of councils that were aware of register information being accessed during active emergency events for evacuation planning, less were accessing the registers for preparedness planning (74 percent). Administrative data extracted from the Crisisworks platform indicates that only five per cent of clients removed since the implementation of the registers have been removed due to a personal emergency plan being put in place (150 of 2869 clients removed from registers).

Over the last five years there has been low numbers of requests for the Australian Red Cross to provide emergency planning support under the policy. Where there were requests, feedback indicates that the people reached through this service greatly benefit from the one on one support that is offered in visits, but that in many cases the emergency planning needs of a person were unable to be met by a point-in-time service. Examples identified included situations where people need long term or ongoing support to apply and adjust their emergency plan or build their capacity to maintain plans themselves.

1. **Eligibility criteria adequacy and adherence**

The eligibility criteria for inclusion on the registers has helped to guide identification of people most at risk in emergencies. However, it has not been consistently understood or applied in some cases and there has been disagreement around its adequacy. Interview and survey responses reported instances of confusion and variation in the interpretation of eligibility criteria. Respondents expressed perceptions that there are a number of people on a register who do not meet the eligibility criteria, as well some people who are not on a register and likely require assistance. There have also been instances where CSOs have used the register as a safety net to protect the welfare of their clients. In many cases, the desire from CSOs to place people who are not eligible on a register went beyond its design and intent. However, the interpretation of the criteria has been observed to have improved over time.

1. **Implementation of consent protocols**

Interview and survey responses cite common examples where a client did not consent or did not understand that they were being placed on the register and have later requested to be removed during the revalidation process. The lack of record keeping around consent was identified as a key issue by councils, with many expressing that they believed that client consent was not being sought in a significant number of cases. Administrative data from Datalink shows that only 50 per cent of people on the registers have consent forms uploaded to their records.

###

### Roles and responsibilities

1. **CSO responsibilities**

Understanding of the intent and purpose of the registers is inconsistent. There are conflicting views around who the primary owners or users of the registers are, and whether the registers were primarily response tools to be used by Victoria Police in evacuation settings, or to be used more broadly for local preparedness planning.

Of councils that responded to the survey, 74 per cent rated their understanding of their coordination role as strong. By contrast, there was more variation in the way service providers understood their role, with 45 per cent rating their organisation as having ‘moderate’ understanding and 27 per cent as having ‘some understanding’.

Councils reported some confusion about the role of Australian Red Cross in relation to the registers. The appropriateness of referrals between councils and Australian Red Cross have been reported to be variable. Instances have been reported where misunderstandings of the purpose and scope of the Australian Red Cross’ role have resulted in misguided requests to Australian Red Cross to conduct preliminary assessment for inclusion on a register, rather than the emergency planning support element specified in the policy.

1. **Unverified and unattached client records**

Issues associated with having ‘unverified’ and ‘unattached’ client records presented some of the most significant challenges for councils. At the time of the evaluation, there were approximately 124 unverified client records on the register with 78 of these ‘unattached’ from a service provider. This makes it very difficult for councils to confirm the circumstances of these people, resulting in records remaining unverified on the register for extended periods of time.

A common challenge experienced by council coordinators arises from service providers detaching from client records on the Crisisworks platform without inputting notes into the system. This results in the absence of information on the reason for their detachment and the client’s ongoing needs or circumstances. There have been many instances where service providers have detached from a client record because the client has changed service provider but without noting which service provider the client has been transferred to. There is an expectation that both service providers are talking to each other, and that the new service provider is added to the client record before the former service provider detaches from the record. However, this often not the case in practice.

Challenges such as client records becoming unattached from a service provider are exacerbated by a lack of engagement between implementing organisations at the local level. Interview responses indicated that relationships between council coordinators and local service providers were largely absent outside of the revalidation process. During the revalidation process, many councils reported difficulties contacting service providers who had not verified their clients. This was reported to be worsened by staff turnover in these organisations.

There were also varying roles and relationships from within CSOs between the those who have a coordination role and support workers in direct contact with clients. Responses indicate that the coordinators could be in roles where they did not have direct engagement with clients. This may have implications for the revalidation process. An example is an organisation where support workers were responsible for the initial assessment of clients for inclusion on a register but then had no further involvement with the process or access to Crisisworks. In this example, the coordinators in a non-client facing role rely on administrative information about client circumstances to make a judgement when revalidating client records. Further communication with support workers was not part of this revalidation process due to the coordinator’s misinterpretation of the privacy requirements for client information.

### Implementation training and materials

1. **Capability and implementation issues**

On the job training of staff in the ‘orientation’ phase of their involvement with a register was noted by interview participants as an important step in gaining a consistent understanding of the intent of the registers and how they are implemented.

Survey responses indicated that experiences range from staff not being trained, some having ad hoc training, and others with proactive and integrated training. Both surveys asked about the levels of emergency preparedness/ planning training of staff implementing the registers. Figure 2 compares levels of training in emergency preparedness between council and CSO workers. Most staff answered that they were ‘somewhat’ or ‘partially trained’ but more council staff rated themselves as ‘highly trained’, and more CSO staff rated themselves as ‘not trained at all’.

**Figure 2: Levels of council and CSO emergency preparedness training**

Respondents indicated that a high staff turnover and insufficient training materials attributed to lower levels of staff training.

Australian Red Cross provided training to Home and Community Care providers with clients on a register for a limited period of time in select municipalities. This was said to add value by building workers’ understanding of emergency preparedness to apply in their work with clients. It was reported, that prior to the sessions, these providers were aware that they needed to manage their client records on the register but were unsure of how to support clients with emergency planning. Participant feedback after the training demonstrated increases in the confidence of workers to support their clients to develop an emergency plan.

### The impact of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) transitions

1. **Capability of the policy and registers to function within a changing service provision environment**

Reform under the NDIS and CHSP has resulted in most councils losing visibility of the service providers that deliver services within their municipalities, exposing a weakness in the reliance on service provision as an intake gateway to the registers. Council expressed concern about the ability of the policy and registers to adapt and function within the changing service provision environment, especially as services transition to the NDIS (Figure 3).

**Figure 3 : The management of registers is adaptive to the health and human services sector reform**

Primary concerns around the NDIS transition included:

* The loss of visibility of clients transitioning to services funded by the NDIS.
* Difficulty identifying a primary agency to assess for client inclusion and maintenance of client records, when clients will now often have multiple service providers.
* The loss of levers as both funding and quality and safeguards shift to the Commonwealth.
* The awareness of new providers coming on board about the need for emergency management planning.

### Contemporary emergency management practice

1. **The registers do not reflect an ‘all hazards’ approach due to an evacuation planning focus**

The department’s *Vulnerable people in emergencies* policy was updated to apply to ‘all hazards’ in 2015. However, survey and interview responses indicated that while the policy language had changed, the design and implementation of the registers is not applied to ‘all hazards’. While there has been support for the change as well as numerous instances of its use in non-bushfire emergency events (e.g. floods and smoke plumes), there was still reported underutilisation of the registers for ‘all hazards’.

The registers focus and triggers around evacuation planning are misaligned to current ‘leave early’ messaging. Respondents reported that the use of the registers for evacuation planning needed to work better with current emergency warning systems and advice. This has been reflected in on the ground experience where people on a register have been contacted or visited during an emergency to find that in increasing instances they have already left or been assisted by others to go elsewhere.

1. **Alignment with building community resilience**

The registers do not align well with building community resilience in their current form. Aspects of the policy design is not reflective of communities working together to address planning for those at greater risk. The use of the registers as a tool to support community level planning has been inconsistent and is a secondary consideration to evacuation planning. However, there was also an acknowledgement that a similar tool to the registers would always be needed.

Implementing agencies raised major concerns about the expectations of people on the register. There were frequently cited examples of instances where people on the registers, their families, and in some cases their service providers, believed that placement on the register would guarantee evacuation assistance during an emergency event. This expectation creates a reliance on the emergency services for assistance that cannot be guaranteed. Explanations for these misconceptions include the lack of community information available about the registers, and lack of service provider understanding and training on the intent and purpose of the registers.

1. **Alternative practices**

Multiple alternative practises were identified as being used across different councils for similar or overlapping purposes to the registers. The most common alternative practice was the creation of informal lists. These lists may or may not include people who are also on the registers. Often these lists contain the names of people who are thought to be vulnerable but do not meet the registers eligibility criteria, or in some cases, those who were perceived as suitable for inclusion on a register but would not give consent. Some councils used sophisticated systems built around their existing client databases to track and engage people at risk during high fire danger or heatwave periods that was integrated with Home and Community Care service delivery. In other cases, more formal lists, such as those used for heat health alerts are used for dual purposes including emergency planning for vulnerable groups.

## Conclusion

The registers have been effective to some extent in assisting Victoria Police, local council, and services providers to respond to the needs of community members at greatest risk in emergencies. However, the overreliance on service provision as a gateway to inclusion on the registers must be addressed to strengthen the reach and effectiveness of the register and prevent those not in receipt of department funded services people from being overlooked.

Evidence has shown that use of the registers to support evacuation planning has been gradually declining since 2014. There are pockets across Victoria where the registers have strengthened service integration to provide appropriate emergency support and referral for eligible at-risk people. The varying level of understanding of agencies around the intent and purpose of the register, as well as roles and responsibilities, has resulted in inconsistent use across the State. Issues associated with having unverified and unattached clients presented some of the most significant challenges for councils.

Capability building of CSO staff responsible for assessing and/or revalidating clients on the register would assist in improving efficiency of the registers. Standardised and specialist training was identified as an area of high need for the personnel of all implementing agencies.

The registers do not reflect contemporary emergency management practice and promotion of community resilience in its current form. Implementation of the registers is misaligned to ‘leave early’ advice and does not reflect a true ‘all hazards’ approach, due to its evacuation planning focus. Consideration to how the registers could best support building community resilience would realign use of registers with more contemporary practise.