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| Vulnerable people in emergencies policy |
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|  | Vulnerable people in bushfire risk areas policy 2011-12 |  | First published 2011. |
| 1. | Vulnerable people in emergencies policy | November 2012 | Updated to reflect ‘all hazards’ approach, EMMV and the Vulnerable Persons Register |
| 2.  | Vulnerable people in emergencies policy | May 2015 | Updated to reflect machinery of government changes |
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# 1. Context

## 1.1 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (the VBRC) was established on 16 February 2009 to investigate the causes and responses to the bushfires that impacted parts of Victoria in late January and February 2009. The VBRC Final Report in July 2010 made 67 recommendations, including **Recommendation 3**:

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| The State establish mechanisms for helping municipal councils to undertake local planning that tailors bushfire safety options to the needs of individual communities. In doing this planning, councils should:urgently develop for communities at risk of bushfire local plans that contain contingency options such as evacuation and shelter 3.2 document in municipal emergency management plans and other relevant plans facilities where vulnerable people are likely to be situated - for example, aged care facilities, hospitals, schools and child care centres3.3 compile and maintain a list of vulnerable residents who need tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate3.4 provide this list to local police and anyone else with pre-arranged responsibility for helping vulnerable residents evacuate |

The Victorian Government accepted all 67 recommendations and the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services (replaced by the Department of Health and Human Services) were designated as the lead agencies for responding to Recommendation 3 and specifically 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4. Victoria Police is responsible for developing a comprehensive approach to evacuation under Recommendation 5 of the VBRC Final Report.

The Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor is responsible for monitoring progress against recommendations from the VBRC Final Report.

## 1.2 2010-11 Victorian Flood Review

Recommendation 67 of the *2010-11 Review of the Victorian Floods Warnings and Response* suggested that that the definition of a vulnerable person and associated policy(ies) be applicable across ‘all hazards’.

# 2. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to improve the safety of vulnerable people in emergencies, through supporting:

* emergency planning with and for vulnerable people;
* developing local lists of facilities where vulnerable people may be located; and
* developing local lists of vulnerable people (**Vulnerable Persons Registers**) who may need consideration (tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate) in an emergency, and make these lists available to those with responsibility for helping vulnerable residents evacuate.

# 3. Principles

## 3.1 Supporting local emergency planning and preparation

The policy outlines an approach that supports municipal councils to assist communities and local people to plan and prepare for emergencies. Harnessing local knowledge and supporting local activities is essential for effective planning and response to emergencies.

## 3.2 Integrating emergency planning with service delivery

Integrating emergency management planning with service delivery is fundamental to enhancing client outcomes and safety. The policy utilises the existing relationships of funded agencies who provide care and welfare services to identify vulnerable people and to support their personal emergency planning. Over time these processes should be embedded in practice.

## 3.3 Encouraging personal and community preparation and resilience

The policy supports shared responsibility and community resilience, recognising the important role of local people and communities in caring for and helping their family, friends and neighbours.

While Vulnerable Persons Registers will be established, personal and community resilience must be encouraged and expectations about potential provision of assistance or evacuation managed. Evacuation of vulnerable individuals within the community cannot be guaranteed in emergencies and any assistance in an emergency or evacuation will be dependent on the capacity and ability of emergency services organisations to safely provide it.

# 4. Scope

The policy covers the key activities of:

* planning for vulnerable people in emergencies;
* vulnerable persons registers; and
	+ identification of facilities housing vulnerable people.

The term ‘vulnerable’ can be defined broadly in relation to emergencies. The activities and processes set out in the policy and the supporting materials target a clearly defined group within the community and do not seek to address all ‘at risk communities and people’.

The activities outlined in and facilitated by the policy are integrated with a range of activities relating to prevention, preparation, response and recovery that target people who may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons and to a variety of hazards.

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| For the purposes of the policy a *vulnerable person[[1]](#footnote-1)* is defined as someone living in the community who is:frail, and/or physically or cognitively impaired; andunable to comprehend warnings and directions and/or respond in an emergency situation. |

Figure 1. Vulnerable People in Emergencies Policy Scope



The policy applies to the 64 rural, regional and urban fringe municipal councils wholly or partly within CFA districts. A full list is provided in Appendix 1.

The policy builds on the bushfire specific approach of previous policies, including the *Vulnerable People in Bushfire Risk Areas Policy 2011-12* (which is superseded by the policy). The policy promotes general emergency planning with vulnerable people, which would be beneficial for a range of hazards and emergencies, but does not outline hazard specific approaches.

The policy will also enable information contained in Vulnerable Persons Registers to be used by Victoria Police and other authorised emergency management organisations for consideration in planning for and responding to a range of emergencies, where tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate may be required. It is acknowledged that some hazards, such as bushfire, may require additional targeted personal emergency planning.

# 5. Planning for vulnerable people in emergencies

The policy promotes and encourages personal and community emergency planning for vulnerable people in emergencies - as they are likely to require more time or assistance to respond safely to emergencies. This is promoted through a number of channels, including:

* **Public communications** - encouraging personal emergency planning and community resilience for vulnerable people as part of broader whole of government education and awareness strategies.
* **Supporting vulnerable people (receiving services) with emergency planning**
* **Supporting vulnerable people (not receiving services) with emergency planning**

## 5.1 The role of funded agencies in planning for vulnerable people in emergencies

Agencies funded to provide personal care, support and case management services to people living in the community have a key role in relation to the safety and welfare of clients. The policy utilises the existing relationships and agency role in supporting clients to improve their safety and resilience through promoting personal emergency planning.

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| For the purposes of the policy **funded agencies** refers to:those agencies who provide personal care, support and/or case management services either in home or community settings, to clients living in the community[[2]](#footnote-2). This includes health or community care services such as home and community care, personal care or disability day programs. Note: This includes municipal councils providing funded services covered by the policy. |

The policy applies to agencies providing relevant services who are funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and it can also be applied by Commonwealth funded agencies and other providers. Agencies funded by the Department of Health and Human Services are required to participate through funding agreements, where applicable.

Funded agencies have a responsibility toencourage and, where necessary, support clients (who meet the definition of a vulnerable person) to undertake personal emergency planning.

These agencies know, assess and provide assistance and care to vulnerable people through their services and can have an important role in helping support emergency preparation and resilience, including facilitating people to identify and develop their own personal and community support networks.

There are a range of emergency planning materials available, including materials specifically targeting people with vulnerabilities. Key documents that can be used to plan are referenced in Appendix 2 - Resources. Where there is recognised bushfire risk, specific bushfire planning should be undertaken in addition to basic personal emergency planning.

Funded agencies are not expected to be a part of a client’s plan for emergency response or evacuation – where this is outside of current agency practices. Management of evacuation is the responsibility of Victoria Police.

Through the process of supporting emergency planning funded agencies are asked to screen for Vulnerable Persons Registers.

## 5.2 The role of Red Cross in planning for vulnerable people in emergencies

When individuals not receiving services are identified by an agency as potentially vulnerable Red Cross will provide emergency planning support. If Red Cross identifies that these people are unable to develop plans they will refer them back to Council for screening for inclusion on the Vulnerable Persons Register.

# 6. Vulnerable persons registers

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| A *vulnerable person[[3]](#footnote-3)* may be identified for inclusion on a Vulnerable Persons Register if they **additionally**:cannot identify personal or community support networks to help them in an emergency. |

Vulnerable Persons Registers (VPRs) have been developed to store local information about consenting, identified vulnerable people, which will be directly entered by funded agencies and locally overseen by municipal councils. The VPRs are cloud-based and directly accessible to authorised representative from Victoria Police (without having to contact the council or funded agency) to aid emergency planning and response, including potential evacuation.

Local administration of Vulnerable Persons Registers involves:

* **Screening for Vulnerable Persons Registers** - to identify vulnerable persons (receiving and not receiving services) who additionally cannot identify personal or community support networks to help them in an emergency to be included on a Vulnerable Persons Register.
* **Entering and maintaining information in Vulnerable Persons Registers** for consenting, identified people, which is available to those with responsibility for emergency response and evacuations.

## 6.1 The role of funded agencies in screening for Vulnerable Persons Registers

Funded agencies[[4]](#footnote-4) are asked to consider and screen clients to identify people who should be listed on a Vulnerable Persons Register because they:

* meet the definition of a *vulnerable person;* **and**
	+ *cannot identify personal or community support networks to help them in an emergency.*

The *Vulnerable people in emergencies (VPE) guidelines* provide further detail in relation to screening.

To list an identified vulnerable person on a Vulnerable Persons Register, funded agencies need to:

* Obtain informed consent from identified people to go on the Vulnerable Persons Register

To enable information to be entered on Vulnerable Persons Registers, which will be accessible for planning for and responding to emergencies, agencies will need to gain informed consent from identified people. This is voluntary and a template consent form has been developed to assist agencies.

* Enter and maintain information on Vulnerable Persons Registers

Funded agencies will be responsible for entering and maintaining information about identified vulnerable persons on the Vulnerable Persons Register. This information will need to be updated.

Vulnerable Persons Registers may be used by Victoria Police and other authorised emergency management organisations for consideration in planning activities (including exercises and training) and for responding to a range of emergencies where there is the capacity and resources to safely provide assistance.

## 6.2 The role of municipal councils in coordinating local implementation of Vulnerable Persons Registers

Under the policy, municipal councils have a role in coordinating local Vulnerable Persons Registers, which can be viewed through the existing municipal council administered Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre Central emergency management systems. This coordination will include basic system administration and local oversight of Vulnerable Persons Registers, which will support local planning.

Funded agencies will be responsible for entering and maintaining information about identified people. Vulnerable Persons Registers will be accessible to authorised Victoria Police representatives, for consideration in planning and exercising, and for responding to emergencies.

# 7. Identification of facilities housing vulnerable people

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| For the purposes of the policy **facilities** refers to:buildings where vulnerable people are likely to be situated, including aged care facilities, hospitals, schools, disability group homes and child care centres. This includes:facilities funded or regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education and TrainingCommonwealth funded residential aged care facilitiesother locally identified facilities likely to have vulnerable people situated in them. |

In addition to local lists of vulnerable people living in the community, the policy also requires development of a list of local facilities where vulnerable people are likely to be situated, which needs to be available to those with responsibility for evacuation.

## 7.1 The role of municipal councils in developing and maintaining a list of local facilities where vulnerable people are likely to be situated

Municipal councils are required to develop and maintain a list of facilities where vulnerable people are likely to be situated – including aged care facilities, hospitals, schools, disability group homes and child care centres. This includes:

* facilities funded or regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education and Training
	+ Commonwealth funded residential aged care facilities.

Municipal Councils should also consider and identify other local facilities or amenities that may have vulnerable people situated in them. This will differ dependent on location, but would include sites where vulnerable people:

* frequently meet or gather
	+ commonly reside.

Consideration may therefore be given to facilities or amenities such as Senior Citizens Centres, or retirement villages, rooming houses and caravan parks where there are long-term residents who are vulnerable (not a primarily tourism based caravan park)[[5]](#footnote-5). Informal, ad hoc or temporary gatherings of vulnerable people in the community are not required to be included.

A template for the facilities list has been developed and should be used to compile this list. Facilities lists are to be included in, or available through, *Municipal emergency management plans* and must be accessible to Victoria Police for the purposes of planning, exercising and in the event of an emergency.

Funded facilities are expected to have emergency management plans in place for people residing, staying or situated within facilities. The role of an operator of a facility does not equal a requirement to undertake individual emergency planning activities or to screen people for Vulnerable Persons Registers.

# Appendix 1 - List of Municipal Councils in CFA Districts

Alpine Shire Council

Ararat Rural City Council

Ballarat City Council

Banyule City Council

Bass Coast Shire Council

Baw Baw Shire Council

Buloke Shire Council

Campaspe Shire Council

Cardinia Shire Council

Casey City Council

Central Goldfields Shire Council

Benalla Rural City Council

Colac-Otway Shire Council

Corangamite Shire Council

East Gippsland Shire Council

Frankston City Council

Gannawarra Shire Council

Glenelg Shire Council

Golden Plains Shire Council

Greater Bendigo City Council

Greater Dandenong City Council

Greater Geelong City Council

Greater Shepparton City Council

Hepburn Shire Council

Hindmarsh Shire Council

Horsham Rural City Council

Hume City Council

Indigo Shire Council

Kingston City Council

Knox City Council

Latrobe City Council

Loddon Shire Council

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Manningham City Council

Mansfield Shire Council

Maroondah City Council

Melton City Council

Mildura Rural City Council

Mitchell Shire Council

Moira Shire Council

Moorabool Shire Council

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

Moyne Shire Council

Mount Alexander Shire Council

Murrindindi Shire Council

Nillumbik Shire Council

Northern Grampians Shire Council

Pyrenees Shire Council

Borough of Queenscliff

South Gippsland Shire Council

Southern Grampians Shire Council

Strathbogie Shire Council

Surf Coast Shire Council

Swan Hill Rural City Council

Towong Shire Council

Wangaratta Rural City Council

Warrnambool City Council

Wellington Shire Council

West Wimmera Shire Council

Whittlesea City Council

Wodonga City Council

Wyndham City Council

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Yarriambiack Shire Council

# Appendix 2 – Resources

Department of Health

**Planning**

General emergency planning

The Red Cross has developed a range of resources to assist emergency preparation, including materials targeting seniors and people with a disability - <https://www.redcross.org.au/emergency-resources>

Other planning and property preparedness information is available from CFA at <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/>

Storms and floods

For information visit the Victoria State Emergency Service FloodSafe and Stormsafe program on VicSES website at <http://www.ses.vic.gov.au/prepare>

Heatwave

For a variety of information about heatwave including the *Heatwave plan for Victoria*, factsheets about heatwaves and the Heat Health Alert System, visit

[Extreme heat and heatwaves (health.vic.gov.au)](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/environmental-health/extreme-heat-and-heatwaves)

**Relevant documents and policies**

Vulnerable people in emergencies guidelines

The Vulnerable people in emergencies guidelines (Emergency planning and screening and Vulnerable persons registers) should be read in conjunction with the policy, and provide further support and guidance for implementation, including in relation to screening and identification and the use of Vulnerable Persons Registers <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/emergency-management>

Emergency preparedness reference guide

[*Preparing for emergencies: A reference guide for organisations in the Health and Community Services Sectors*](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/Preparing%20for%20Emergencies%20Reference%20Guide.docx) is a resource for organisations across both the health sector and the community services sector to plan for and effectively respond to external emergencies.

Organisations that identify as being part of the broader health sector and community services sector that provide services to clients can use the reference guide. It provides tips and advice for developing an emergency management plan.

[Preparing for emergencies: A reference guide for organisations in the health and community services sectors - DFFH Service Providers](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/preparing-emergencies-reference-guide-organisations-health-and-community-services-sectors)

1. This applies to clients of funded agencies and people not receiving services. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In the 64 municipal councils covered by the policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Refer to the definition of a vulnerable person on page 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Note: This includes municipal councils providing funded services covered by the policy [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Residents of non-funded facilities may still require personal emergency planning support and may be considered for the Vulnerable Persons Register. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)