Community Recovery Toolkit

Bushfire Recovery Victoria

Purpose

This Community Recovery Toolkit aims to provide an initial suite of guidance and tools to support communities impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires to establish and shape their community recovery processes.

The toolkit aims to provide practical advice on:

- The process for recovery and approaches that a community may adopt in preparing for recovery planning.

- Tools and templates to support each step of the community recovery process.

The toolkit is not intended to be prescriptive – rather it has been developed as a guide and planning resource for use by communities as needed.

Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) will work in partnership with local councils and communities to understand emerging community needs and continue to develop this toolkit in an iterative way that builds on community feedback and responds to evolving community needs.

The Community Recovery Toolkit builds on lessons and insights from previous disaster recovery experiences, including content from the *EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Local Government, Book 7 (2014)* and the *DHHS Community-led Recovery Workbook (2011)*.

Audience

This document is intended to support community members impacted by a disaster to define and lead a community recovery process, with support from government agencies and others. A key secondary audience is local councils, who have a day-to-day role in supporting communities on the ground.

This toolkit can be read alongside the BRV's *Recovery Framework* and BRV's *Community Engagement Framework*, which outlines BRV's approach to community-led recovery, particularly in ensuring that all levels of government work together to support communities to recover.

Acknowledgment of Country

BRV proudly acknowledges the First Peoples of Victoria and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Accessibility

This document is available for downloading at brv.vic.gov.au. Contact connect@brv.vic.gov.au if you require other accessible formats.

Contents

1

What is community recovery?

Community recovery is often described as a journey rather than a destination. People affected by disaster will often experience high and low emotional states throughout the recovery process.

Fluctuating moods, energy and ability to take control of their circumstances influence their understanding of the recovery tasks and their capacity to plan and undertake what is required. Morale and energy rise as they start to resume a self-reliant and independent life and dip as anxiety and stress are retriggered by practical setbacks and lingering grief.

The below image depicts the four-phase pathway to recovery that many people might travel – reacting to the emergency, coming to terms with what's occurred, restoration of some of life's normalities and re-establishment of life post the event. People will not necessarily move through these stages at the same pace. For many, the process will be a challenging, uncertain and frustrating one that is neither reliable nor quick. For some recovery might take several years – or might never be fully attained. For these reasons, community recovery needs to be flexible, responsive and long-term.

Source: EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Local Government, Book 1 (2014)

When thinking about community recovery, it is useful to consider two distinct types of communities:

- communities of place (e.g. townships, regions), and

- communities of interest (e.g. small business, tourism, primary industry.

2

How is community recovery supported?

BRV and local government support communities to develop their own recovery governance and planning processes. This may include the establishment of Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) to lead the community's recovery journey.

CRCs reflect the diversity of the community they represent. They give a voice to the broad views and aspirations of the community, are a conduit between communities and local and state government, and identify the community's recovery priorities.

The specific role and optional forms of CRCs is dealt with in greater detail in section 4 of this toolkit.

For more information on the Victorian structures that support emergency management and disaster recovery visit:

- brv.vic.gov.au

- emv.vic.gov.au

3

What is BRVs role in community-led recovery?

When a significant disaster strikes an area, it is the people who make up that community who are the hardest hit. From the roof over their heads, to access to essential medical services, to the schools their children attend, to their jobs – the basic functions of everyday life can be severely impacted.

BRV recognises the importance of community taking back control and leading on the recovery decisions and processes that will reshape and rebuild their lives. This approach also allows for greater social cohesion and the possibility that through rallying together in times of crises communities can emerge stronger, more connected, more community-minded and more resilient.
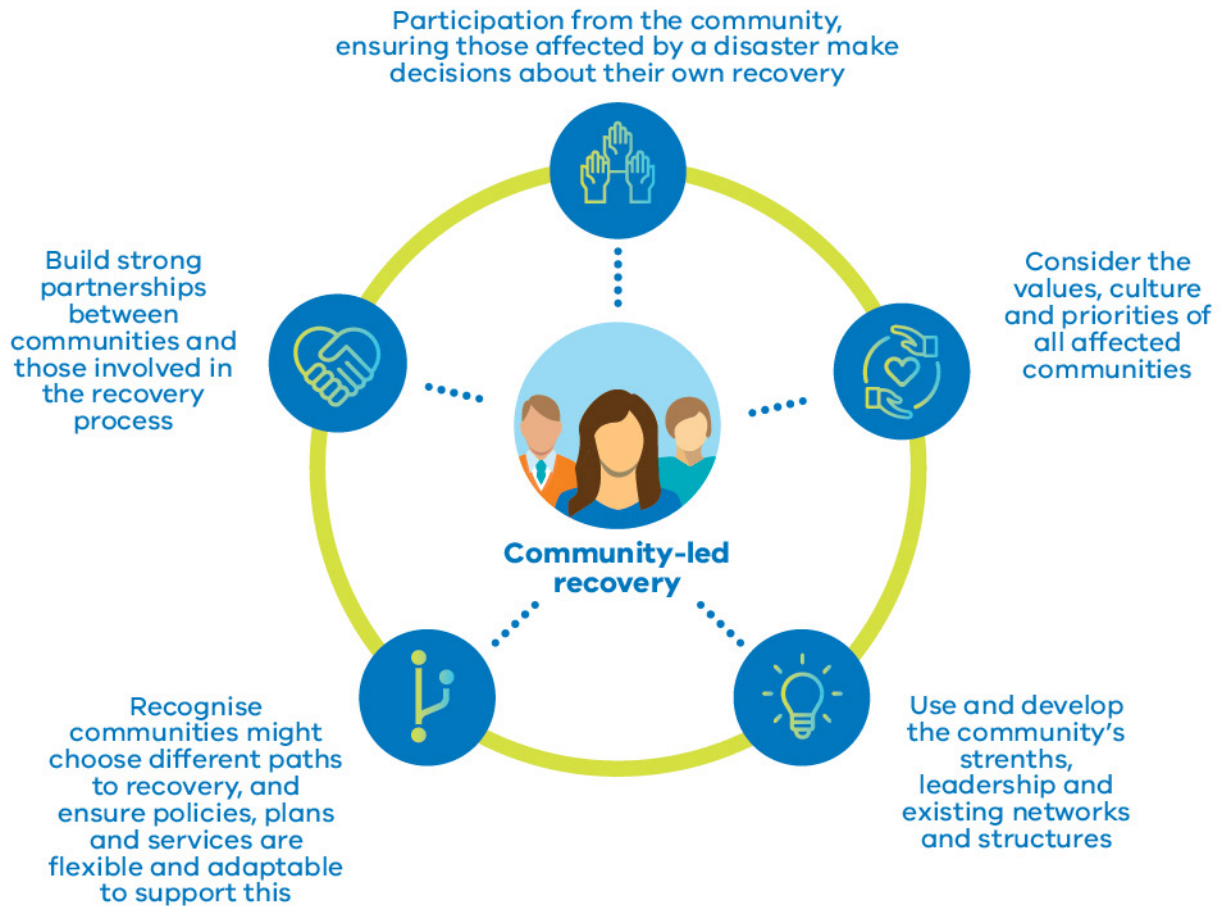
A community-led approach moves beyond a traditional community engagement method, where the community provides input or is engaged through a process determined by the government. BRV's recovery model is community-led and supports communities to lead their own processes, decide what their priorities are and develop their own plans for achieving results.

Community-led recovery is open-ended and not pre-determined, which means ideas are considered and agreed collectively by the community, and activities and priorities are adapted and refined as required.

BRV has adapted the Victorian Government's approach to ensure community-led recovery is front and centre of recovery activities, as outlined below.

Ensuring community-led recovery is front and centre of recovery activities

Participation from the community, ensuring those affected by a disaster make decisions about their own recovery

Consider the values, culture and priorities of all affected communities

Build strong partnerships between communities and those involved in the recovery process

Use and develop the community's strenths, leadership and existing networks and structures

Recognise communities might choose different paths to recovery, and ensure policies, plans and services are flexible and adaptable to support this

Community-led recovery

BRV has a critical role in supporting the establishment and effective running of community-led recovery processes. Local and Commonwealth governments as well as non-government and charity organisations all have important roles in giving life to the principle of community-led recovery, and BRV works collaboratively with each.

Recovery is not exclusive to the geography of an impacted area. In some cases, a disaster may cause significant displacement of people and subsequent movement of people across the state. This means the people BRV support may not be located in the specific region of the disaster.

Recovery principles

BRV's recovery principles underpin its approach to community led recovery. These principles support flexible, locally-driven and locally delivered action and can be applied to deal with complex issues and support needs as required. The principles are:

Understand the context
Successful recovery is based on understanding the community context – the unique history, values and dynamics of a community.

Communicate effectively
Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.

Recognise complexity
Successful recovery responds to the complex and dynamic nature of disasters and the community.

Recognise and build capacity
Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience.

Use community-led approaches
Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, and it relies on community engagement to support them to move forward.

Strengthen communities
Successful recovery should leave communities stronger by reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience.

Coordinate all activities
Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptative approach, between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.

Ensure an inclusive approach
Successful recovery recognises that communities are made of many groups and ensures that actions, both intentional and unintentional, do not exclude groups of people.

The National Principles for Disaster Recovery, provide six of the eight guiding principles for the Framework positioning individuals and communities at the centre of recovery. BRV has included two additional principles in the Recovery Framework - strengthening communities and inclusiveness - informed by the Queensland Betterment Program and the National Disaster Recovery Framework principles adopted by the United States.

BRV also recognises that successful recovery relies on government enabling self-determination to support effective and culturally appropriate responses for Victorian Aboriginal communities affected by bushfires or other disasters. BRV will work with Aboriginal communities to ensure its recovery activities are underpinned by self-determination.
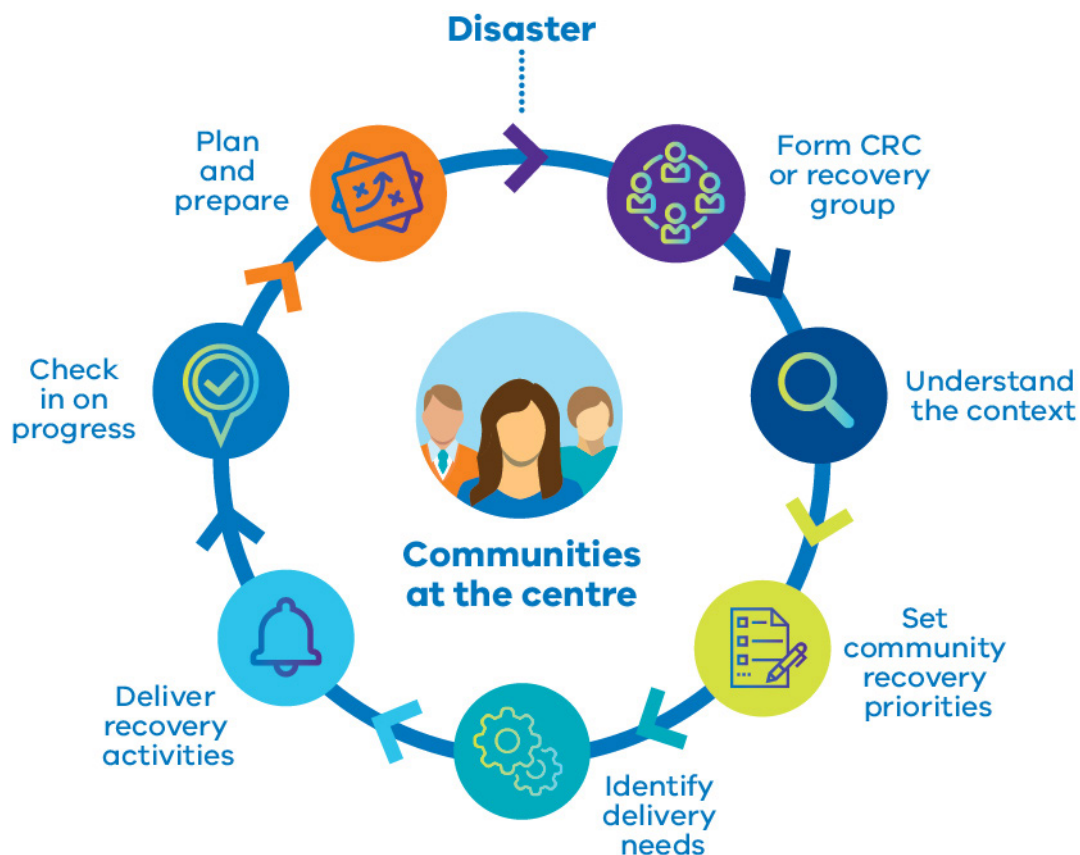
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What are the steps to recovery?

A successful recovery journey means communities identify their own needs, make decisions about their recovery priorities and influence community planning. This ensures that the recovery process is matched to local community needs.

The below diagram illustrates useful steps towards recovery and towards greater resilience. Depending on your community's unique context and preferences, these steps may not be completed in order, and some steps may not be undertaken at all. They are provided as a guide only, to be tailored to meet your community's needs.

The remainder of this toolkit is structured around these steps, with guidance, templates and tools suggested for each step.

Disaster

Plan and prepare

Check in on progress

Deliver recovery activities

Form CRC or recovery group

Understand the context

Set community recovery priorities

Identify delivery needs

Communities at the centre

Step 1: Establish a community-led recovery approach

If the effects of an emergency are widespread or serious, communities may choose to establish a CRC to lead the recovery planning process for the community. This may be an existing community group or network, or a brand new group.

With the support of BRV and local government, this group would undertake the remaining steps.

Step 2: Set community recovery priorities

When a community is ready, they should engage with local community members and relevant interest groups to consider the impacts of the disaster, the broader context of challenges, and opportunities for the community in helping to identify their recovery priorities.

It is useful for the community to develop a shared vision for the future of the community to help guide priorities. These would be expressed as a community recovery plan.

Engagement approaches and activities should be tailored to community characteristics and preferences and appropriate to the nature and impact of an emergency. It is important to ensure all community values, cultures and perspectives are considered through this process.

Step 3: Identify delivery needs

After identifying recovery priorities, communities may wish to identify the actions and resources needed to deliver on the priorities. This may include community resources, access to grants, volunteers or philanthropic donations.

Step 4: Deliver recovery activities

It's important that communities own the delivery of their own recovery activities. This means that they should have a key role in coordinating, managing and driving implementation of their community recovery plan.

Step 5: Check in on progress

Regularly checking in on progress towards achieving recovery priorities will be important. This will make sure activities are on track, and risks are identified early and communicated back to the community.

Step 6: Plan and prepare

Any lessons learned from the emergency, or recovery process, should be captured to help improve any existing emergency plans for the community. Documenting these lessons and reviewing existing plans will make sure communities are more resilient and prepared for future disasters.

Developing a Community Recovery Plan

Start with developing a vision for your community. Map out your context and the unique history, values and dynamics of your community. There is no right or wrong way to write a community plan, however, the plan should capture your community's short, medium, and longer-term recovery goals and priorities.

Community Recovery Plans should build on existing community plans, with a focus on any goals or priorities that have changed or emerged following the recent disaster.

Depending on your community and the nature, scale and impact of the disaster, your Community Recovery Plan can cover recovery priorities across BRV's five lines of recovery (see below) and consistent with BRV's Principles of Recovery. A Community Recovery Plan is your community's plan.

What is the purpose of the Plan?

The plan's purpose is to capture the recovery goals and priorities of the community. This may include actions or activities that require community resources, access to grants or volunteers, initiatives that could be supported by philanthropic organisations or donors, as well as those which would benefit from government support.

You can include as much or as little information as is relevant to your community, and be as ambitious or pragmatic as your community wishes to be.

Consider producing an interim Community Recovery Plan if you need to identify priorities for immediately-available funding in the first few months following establishment of the CRC.

Bushfire Recovery Victoria's lines of recovery:

Disasters can upturn all aspects of everyday life – from the trees and wildlife that surround us, to utilities, homes, agricultural and public buildings, to social enjoyment and economic activity.

To ensure a holistic approach to recovery, five lines of recovery have been identified to help prioritise and plan:

1. People and wellbeing

2. Aboriginal culture and healing

3. Environment and biodiversity

4. Business and economy

5. Buildings and infrastructure

Step 1: Establish a community-led recovery approach

How do we choose a community-led approach that works for us?

Choosing an approach to recovery that suits your community will depend on the impact of the disaster and the existing networks and organisations in the community.

It will be useful to get together and ask questions, such as:

What was the impact?

Is it widespread or serious (consider primary as well as secondary impacts), or is the impact limited to only a small number of individuals or one clearly defined cohort of the community?

How are our families, friends, neighbours and others in the community faring?

How would we prefer to approach recovery, for example, informally -responding to issues as they emerge, or more formally – making plans for our short, medium and long term recovery?

What is our previous experience of planning together as a community?

If a formal approach is preferred, is there an organisation in our community that can lead recovery, for example, the local hall or recreation reserve committee?

If not, is there a group or network that can drive a wider conversation on how we approach recovery and establish a formal group, for example, a local service delivery network?

Is your community interested and able to come together to meet regularly to shape and drive the recovery process? Would it need support from local council or BRV?

Are there other nearby communities that share similar recovery priorities to your community and that you could work together with?

TIP

These questions will take time to answer. Members of the community will need time to deal with their own circumstances and potential grief before considering broader issues. Investing in opportunities that will assist the healing process will be critical to getting organised about recovery.

Community-led recovery is a choice

All communities are different, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to community recovery. Depending on the nature, scale and impact of a disaster and the community's unique characteristics, community-led recovery might involve informal or formal approaches.

Informal approaches

Informal approaches can be a fast and effective way to identify individual and/or community recovery needs and priorities. Sometimes, a light-touch approach may be appropriate where the scale and impact of the disaster is small or contained. Examples of informal recovery activities include talking through recovery priorities 'over a cup of tea' with other community members, BRV or local council, or participating in small community hall meetings.

 If your community decides on an informal approach, BRV will work in partnership with local council to ensure that your community's recovery needs and priorities are captured and considered through its planning processes.

Formal approaches

Formal recovery approaches can build on existing community structures or networks to aid recovery. They can support existing groups within the community and empower them to support recovery efforts. Examples of this kind of approach include an existing community group taking on the role of recovery or holding facilitated workshops to bring different views together.

Alternatively, formal approaches can involve setting up a new organisation. This might be especially appropriate for communities with significant and/or complex recovery priorities. Structure, membership and involvement can be tailored to the needs of the community. Examples of this kind of approach include establishing an incorporated association or seeking to establish a Special Committee of Council.

 Where a community decides a dedicated community group is appropriate, the group can be recognised as a CRC under Victoria's emergency management arrangements. This recognition enables BRV to assist the group with resources and funding to carry out its work.

Different community-led approaches offer different levels of participation and influence. The following table* sets out the features of some of these options. Relevant groups or organisations might already exist in the community or might need to be purpose-built.

Category	Description	Authority	Influence
Informal	Participation through consultation platforms or events.	Valued perspectives.	Participation is open to all but relies on BRV and local council to create opportunities for community input into recovery decision making.
Advisory group	Representative networks and advisory mechanisms (for example, Council Advisory Group).	Valued expertise. Accountable to Council.	Clear advisory role with a mix of expertise. Meets regularly to ensure community input into recovery decision making.
Committee or sub-committee	Formal governance structure with open and transparent nomination process and clear Terms of Reference (for example, as Special Committee of Council).	Valued expertise. Accountable to Council and community.	Clear decision-making role with balanced skills mix. Meets regularly to shape community engagement processes, consider community needs and priorities and assist in recovery decision making.
Incorporated Association	A membership based organisation with a constitution including stated objectives and managed by a committee elected by the membership.	A separate legal entity (Can hold assets and manage finances; can sue and be sued). Accountable to members and Consumer Affairs Victoria.	Meets regularly to shape community engagement processes, consider community needs and priorities and make recovery decisions. Advocates for recovery projects. May manage projects.

Table adapted from the Regional Development Company, Succession Planning Leadership Forum for Black Saturday CRCs (2010)

How can BRV and local council assist?

BRV and local councils understand that all communities are different, as are the impacts of disasters. Consequently, BRV and your local council will work in partnership to support communities in shaping their own recovery processes and CRC models. For example, convening an initial interest meeting to scope out community interest for a CRC.

Where there are multiple existing or emerging groups across a municipality

BRV and council can support communities to establish a coordinated community group to become the CRC and lead the community's recovery journey. This might involve facilitating meetings between groups or running an Expression of Interest (EOI) process coordinated by the local council and/or BRV.

Where there is one obvious existing community group

BRV and council can support the group to evolve membership or Terms of Reference to become the CRC and lead an inclusive and holistic community recovery process.

Where there is no obvious existing community group

BRV and council can support community consideration of whether a purpose-built CRC is appropriate and:

- If so, support establishment of a new organisation when the community is ready, with a committee selected through an open and transparent process. This may include support for convening an initial interest meeting, providing guidance on governance model options, supporting an open and transparent EOI process, suggesting an independent chair or providing assistance with drafting Terms of Reference.

- If not, support exploration of other CRCs the community could contribute to, or identifying alternate less formal processes for identifying community recovery priorities.

How do we activate an existing organisation or group as a CRC?

Where a CRC is created from an existing organisation or groups it will be useful to ask questions such as:

- Does the recovery role fit with the organisation's existing governance and structures. Does the organisation's purpose need updating?

- If the recovery group is a collaboration between existing organisations, are partners clear on their roles? Is there a need for a Memorandum of Understanding or similar?

- Does the organisation or collaboration reflect the broad range of values, cultures and perspectives within your community, including diversity of place (e.g. townships), interests (e.g. small business), age, gender, culture, and population groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, in particular Traditional Owners. If not, how will this be addressed, for example, recruiting new members or through targeted community consultation?

- Does the organisation or collaboration have the skills and time necessary to lead and coordinate community recovery activities? If not, how will this be addressed, for example, co-opting expertise into the organisation or contracting experts?

How do we form a purpose-built CRC?

A purpose–built CRC is likely to be an advisory or decision-making committee of council or an independent incorporated organisation. While the details to establish these different models will vary, each will need to answer the questions:

- How will we select community leaders to represent us?

- What is our purpose and how will our CRC operate?

> **TIP**
>
> You do not need to name your group the 'Your community Recovery Committee' to be considered a CRC. Existing groups will already have names and many communities prefer terms like renewal or restoration when creating new groups.
>
> For groups that form an incorporated association, the Committee of the Management are the office bearers of the association. It is the association that is the CRC.

There are a number of independent facilitators, community psychologists and community mentors with experience from previous disaster events also available to support communities through this process.

BRV and local council can assist communities to identify suitable people and engage their services.

How will we call for Expressions of Interest?

- Expressions of Interest (EOI) can be called for when establishing a new CRC. The EOI should be accompanied by information that sets out the purpose of the CRC, what knowledge, experience or skills would be useful to the CRC and the selection process.

- The EOI process should be communicated broadly and promoted so that all members of the community are aware of the process and have the opportunity to nominate.

- The EOI process should allow sufficient time for community members to consider their interest in nominating and completing their Expression of Interest (as a general rule, four weeks should be sufficient)

- The selection process should be transparent and conducted by people with credibility for the community. Alternatively, the community can be invited to vote directly for committee members from among the nominees.

- The committee will need to elect a Chair following induction. The Chair will ideally have an active role or leadership within the community, and is able to commit the time and effort required to undertake a key role.

> ### TIP
> Encourage people with the credibility, skills and commitment to join their CRC. Pay attention to including representatives of particular interest groups or population groups (for example, youth, culturally diverse groups, small businesses).
>
> Match the skills and interests of people with CRC roles. For example, some people thrive on 'big picture' topics, while others will be more task oriented.

Below is a template that can be used to call for expressions of interest for membership of a CRC. This example includes a call for expressions of interest in the role of Chair. An alternative approach is that appointed members are invited to nominate for the position of Chair following their induction into the work of the CRC. BRV and local council can assist with the EOI and selection processes or voting processes to elect a Chair and members.

We are calling for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for community members wishing to be involved in the [Name] Community Recovery Committee to help shape our community's recovery planning. If you are interested in becoming a Chair or Committee Member, or would like to nominate someone for Committee Chair or Committee Member, please complete the form below. Return the completed form by email or post. [Insert details]. The EOI process will close on [XX/XX/2020].

NAME:

ADDRESS:

OCCUPATION:

EMAIL: **MOBILE:**

I'm interested in the following positions on the Committee: [Chair/Member]

My relevant skills and experience includes:

This Expression of interest is seconded by:

NAME: **DATE:**

What is our purpose and how will our CRC operate?

Once established the CRC will face a number of tasks. These can include:

- coming to a shared understanding of the recovery context and their role

- getting to know each other as a committee

- clarifying to role of BRV, local council and other stakeholders

- determining how they will operate as a CRC – What are the rules regarding how decisions are made? How are conflicts of interest dealt with? How do we manage privacy and confidentiality?

- determining how and when they will identify priorities and plan for the future

- determining how they will engage and communicate with the broader community.

There can be a lot of pressure at this time to 'just get on with it' but investing in establishing sound structures and relationships at the beginning will help in making the CRC more effective over time.

> **TIP**
>
> Consider adopting a 'first 100 days strategy' that sets out the tasks your CRC regard as critical.

Structure and frequency of meetings

Members should agree on an agenda that provides a clear structure for meetings. The following template can be used.

#	FOCUS	LED BY
1	**Welcome and introductions**	**As agreed**
2	**Community profile and impact**	**Council**
	Opportunity for discussion of the bushfire-affected community and the impact assessment	
3	**Overview of recovery arrangements**	**BRV/Council**
	Opportunity for BRV and Council to provide an overview of recovery arrangements at the municipal, regional and state levels and outline their partnership approach	
4	**Recovery activities**	**All**
	What, if any, recovery activities are underway in the community?	
5	**First 100 Days strategy**	**Facilitator**
	Consider the content of a draft First 100 days strategy and prioritise and reshape to suit members	
	Table Terms of Reference - for endorsement at the next meeting	
6	**Next steps**	**Facilitator**
	Confirm date/time of next meeting and discuss schedule of meetings.	

> **TIP**
>
> Discuss with your council or BRV about supports that may be useful to help the committee work smoothlyThis can include providing a facilitator, supporting secretariat functions such as minutes taking at meetings, and providing administrative support such as coordinating invitations and meeting rooms.

Terms of Reference

Once established the CRC will need to establish a Terms of Reference to set the purpose, roles and responsibilities and governance arrangements for the CRC. The following template can be used:

[NAME] COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEE: Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Recovery Committee will coordinate the community-led recovery process to support the recovery efforts of those impacted by the disaster affecting our community.

2. Functions

The Recovery Committee will:

- Identify community needs, including the needs of specific groups, and make recommendations to our relevant council and recovery agencies on actions, activities and plans to support recovery
- Develop a Community Recovery Plan
- Monitor, communicate and review local recovery activities
- Liaise, consult, co-ordinate and negotiate, where appropriate, on behalf of the community with recovery agencies, government departments, recovery providers and the council in order to implement recovery programs and initiatives
- Advocate, where appropriate, in conjunction with the community, including vulnerable groups and communities of interest (e.g. youth, small business, tourism)
- Conduct an evaluation of recovery operations at a point in time agreed by the committee as an informal or formal debrief, as required.

3. Membership

Committee members will determine the Chair and subsequent membership of the Committee.

Secretariat support will be provided by [Name Council or BRV, or by other].

4. Frequency of meetings

The Recovery Committee will meet [frequency] either face-to-face or via teleconference.

Incorporated Associations

The purpose, objects and operations of incorporated associations are set out in the association's rules. Every incorporated association must have rules. The rules:

- are a written document (often called a constitution)
- guide how your association operates
- are a contract between the association and its members
- set out your association's purposes
- list the rights and responsibilities of members and office holders.

In developing its constitution, your association can use the model rules, or create its own rules. In the absence of its own rules, the relevant provisions of the model rules will be deemed to apply. For more on establishing an incorporated association and the model rules, visit Consumer Affairs Victoria. Among the things the constitution will set out are:.

- association membership
- election of office bearers
- committee meeting and general meeting processes, including voting.

TIP

Incorporated associations are generally established by an inaugural committee of people who are committed to the purpose. In the case of CRCs, this committee is commonly those who have been identified through the EOI process and elected to the role. Pursue incorporation as the association once the inaugural committee has come together and completed induction.

Methods of Voting

How you choose to conduct your vote will depend on the size of your community and CRC, and the nature and impact of the motion you wish to pass. This table describes the two most common methods for voting:

Method	Conduct	Counting	Comments
Show of hands	Committee Chair requests those voting in favour of the motion to raise a hand. The procedure is repeated for those voting against the motion.	Usually, the Chair counts the hands and states whether or not the motion has passed. The result is recorded in the minutes.	Voting by show of hands might be difficult when there are a large number of people voting. It might also exclude those who could not attend the meeting but want to participate.
Voting by ballot	Council can help CRCs prepare a ballot paper to distribute at a meeting, in the mail or online. It will have instructions to members (e.g. timeframes to vote, placing a number 1 against their first preference).	Council can help check that the ballot papers have been collected and help to count votes. Council can inform the Chair of the result. The Chair will then announce the result at a meeting or electronically.	Voting by ballot might be preferred where there are large numbers within the community, and for communities that are geographically dispersed. Ballot papers can also be completed anonymously, which means voters are less likely to feel pressured to vote a certain way.

CRC Chair voting ballot template

If you wish to vote by ballot, below is a template that can be used to vote for the Chair of a CRC.

This template uses the 'First Past The Post' system of voting. Under this system, the voter casts a single vote for the candidate of their choice. The candidate who receives the most votes is elected as Chair of the CRC.

First-past-the-post is an easy voting method for communities, as voters only need to choose their first preference.

CRC Chair Voting Ballot

INSTRUCTIONS: Mark X in the box next to the candidate of your choice. Only mark one box.

- ☐ NAME
- ☐ NAME
- ☐ NAME

TIP

For incorporated associations, issues such as voting and appointment of office bearers will be included in their constitution. Other forms of CRC can add these rules about how they operate to their Terms of Reference.

Step 2: Set community recovery priorities

When your community is ready, the CRC, supported by local council, BRV and others as needed, should engage with local community members and relevant interest groups to identify recovery priorities and the outcomes the community wants to achieve. It is important to ensure all community values, cultures and perspectives are considered through this process.

This section provides guidance on setting community recovery priorities, including:

- reflecting diverse community voices and views
- various engagement methods to help identify recovery priorities
- developing a Community Recovery Plan

Five things to consider when preparing for community recovery:

1. Identify your community's diverse values, cultures and perspectives. How will you consider them as part of this process?

2. Identify any community planning work done prior to the disaster that you can build on as part of your recovery planning - you don't need to start from scratch. The disaster may have disrupted the original plan but it may also have opened up opportunities.

3. Consider short, medium and long term-priorities, not just immediate needs.

4. Remember: recovery priorities need to be your community's priorities, not government priorities.

5. Identify the support or guidance your CRC needs from local government, BRV or others. Consider community mentors, community psychologists, facilitators to help relieve administrative burden, assist with engagement or governance, or further develop CRC.

Various engagement methods to help identify recovery priorities

Finding the right engagement approach for the right purpose is crucial to effective engagement. Your CRC will probably need to use a range of engagement methods to take all voices into account when identifying recovery needs and priorities. For very small communities it might be appropriate to use less formal engagement methods such as gathering input door-to-door, whereas for larger communities a more involved approach may be more appropriate. Below are some engagement options your CRC may wish to consider.

METHOD	BENEFITS OR LIMITATIONS
Public meetings	Allows the views of individuals and community groups to be expressed.
	Good platform for simple, consistent information and key messages to large numbers from a community.
	Not a strong forum for dialogue.
	Meeting facilitation skills needed to channel energy productively.
	Might be scope to break up into smaller discussion groups or provide information-feedback booths.
Focus groups	Useful with relatively homogeneous groups.
	Suited to smaller interest and population groups.
	Good for generating and canvassing ideas rather than decisions.
	Allows for creative thinking if well facilitated.
Workshops	Can produce structured exploration of issues, options and ideas and future vision, direction and actions.
	Larger groups and broader agenda possible.
	Format can include smaller groupwork fed back to the whole group.
	Needs skilled facilitation.
Roundtables and forums	A joint planning/decision making forum between council and key stakeholders with expertise about a specific issue.
	Helps to establish a collaborative process from the outset.
	Suited to dealing with topics with technical content.
	Can prepare informed recommendations for broader community consideration.
	Challenges in achieving representation.

METHOD	BENEFITS OR LIMITATIONS
Hard copy surveys	Can provide opportunities to reach mixed audiences where they live and in opportunistic locations. Can be combined with face to face support, for example, interviewers. If face to face interpretation is not possible what is requested must be very clear and brief – preferably pre-tested. Good for gathering ideas and canvassing options. Requires intensive support and interpretation.
Electronic surveys	Can provide opportunities to reach specific audiences where they live. Suited to smaller interest and population groups with existing networks. Face to face interpretation is not possible so what is requested must be very clear and brief. Good for gathering ideas and canvassing options. Excludes groups of the communities who do not participate online.
Vision sureys	Can provide opportunities for input from people who are more visually orientated. Suited to broad invitation, particularly engaging children. Suited to dealing with a specific built or natural environment matters with cultural or heritage implications. Useful to feedback visual depictions of options.
Onsite engagement	This could include walking a roadside with the community and horticulture expert to consider roadside vegetation management/ clearing options. Expertise is on hand to explain and discuss technical aspects. Suited to dealing with a specific built or natural environment matters with cultural or heritage implications.

Reflecting diverse community voices and views

It is important that all community values, cultures and perspectives are considered in the recovery planning process.

Reflecting diverse community views means engaging and listening to as many voices as possible, including people from different localities, people of various ages, gender and population groups (e.g. youth, CALD communities) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly Traditional Owners.

Communities of interest may also emerge depending on the nature and scale of the impact and these voices need to be heard as well. Communities of interest can include tourism operators, primary industries, farming communities and others.

Some members of affected communities may face barriers to inclusion in consultation, for example they may be socially isolated, have low literacy or have a disability that prevents attendance or limits participation at meetings.

To ensure that your recovery plan has considered all views and voices in your community, your CRC should consider using a range of engagement methods.

Some of these might involve using a combination of online and face-to-face meetings, holding meetings on neutral grounds, at different times, or using an independent facilitator to surface insights from diverse community groups.

The following questions can help to ensure specific groups and communities of interest are included in the recovery planning process:

1. What specific groups can be identified for our community (consider maximising inclusion and diversity)?

2. How can we engage with the identified groups? How can we ensure they are part of our community's recovery planning process?

3. What stakeholders can assist with engaging these specific groups in the recovery planning process?

Community Recovery Plan - example template

Our Community's Recovery Vision

Line of Recovery: e.g. People and Wellbeing

GOAL	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINES	RESOURCES	MEASURES
What changes are required to address need?	What projects and initiatives will achieve goals?	Who is responsible for the project?	What are the timeframes?	What is the estimated cost or resourcing required? How will it be funded?	What information will indicate progress of actions?
(Example: To ensure those affected by the disaster are provided with opportunities to reconnect with their communities.)	(Example: Produce a Recovery Concert.)	(Example: Community Arts supported by council's Community Arts Officer.)	(Example: Scheduled within six months.)	(Example: $15,000 grant.)	(Example: Participation rates in events.)
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

Medium and long term recovery planning guide, EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit, Book 8

Step 3: Identify delivery needs

Linking the Community Recovery Plan to the broader recovery efforts

It is important that your CRC's Community Recovery Plan is validated by the community and key stakeholders. This ensures broad ownership and underpins the CRC's advocacy role on behalf of the community.

Once finalised, the Community Recovery Plan should then be provided to the local council, BRV and other stakeholders as appropriate. This will ensure the community-led recovery needs are incorporated across all recovery operations.

BRV and local council can also help communities and CRCs identify delivery partners, funding providers and other supports.

By sharing the Community Recovery Plan with local council, BRV and other stakeholders, the recovery can be undertaken in a planned and coordinated way. This includes:

- Providing advice on funding and grant opportunities.
- Connecting your CRC and community to relevant service providers.
- Providing administrative or secretariat support.

TIP

Include BRV, local council and key stakeholders where appropriate in early planning discussions and deliberations. This allows a stronger insight for them into the priorities that the CRC will ultimately put forward in its plans.
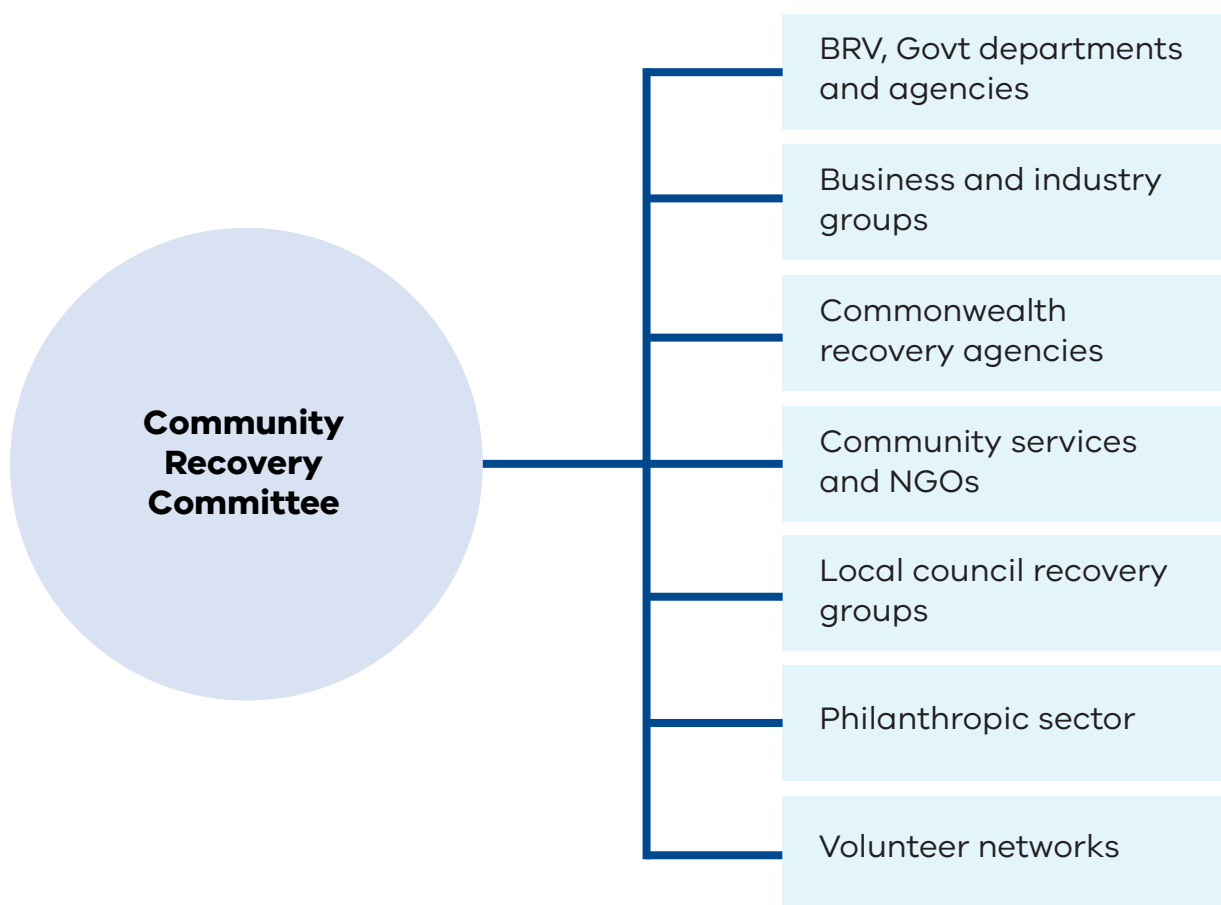
Reserve the right to meet as community members only, where there are concerns that a mixed meeting might stifle open discussion.

Identifying partnerships to deliver priorities

Effective partnerships are critical to delivering community recovery priorities. CRCs will need to establish linkages and relationships with organisations and groups that operate within the broader disaster recovery system.

By building effective partnerships, a CRC is better positioned to improve the capability and capacity of the committee to deliver outcomes for their community. The figure below details and example of possible linages between the CRC and key stakeholders.

Your CRC may wish to map and maintain a register of agencies, community organisations and other groups that your CRC currently engage with that may help in your recovery process.

Community Recovery Committee

- BRV, Govt departments and agencies
- Business and industry groups
- Commonwealth recovery agencies
- Community services and NGOs
- Local council recovery groups
- Philanthropic sector
- Volunteer networks

Step 4: Deliver recovery activities

It is important to continue communicating and engaging with your communities throughout the delivery and implementation process. The community recovery process is an iterative and long-term process. Refer to the tables on page 16 of this document for a range of engagement methods and online tools to support community engagement.

- Maintain clear and regular communication with the community, councils and key stakeholders.

- Provide as much forward advice of community engagement deadlines and avoid being rushed to make decisions.

- Try to stage community engagement with options that mean if people miss an initial deadline, they are not excluded from the whole process.

- Lobby government agencies and advocate for the community for realistic timeframes that match the ability of the community and your CRC to make decisions and meet deadlines.

- Work with neighbouring communities and CRCs to share knowledge and learning from your recovery journeys.

Ongoing checklist

The following checklist can be a guide for CRCs as your communities work on implementing the goals and priorities outlined in your Community Recovery Plan.

- Conduct regular CRC meetings to provide status update of key activities, risks and issues.

- Communicate planned actions to your communities, recovery management teams and key stakeholders.

- Conduct review of short and medium-term activities.

    Are priority needs being met?

    Were any priorities missed in immediate and short-term assessment or have new ones emerged?

- Continue the needs assessment process to inform planning, support and service provision.

- Advocate on behalf of affected communities to government and authorities for support.

- Continue to engage and empower affected communities and interest groups.

- Keep pace with the evolving recovery situation and adapt the Community Recovery Plan in accordance with evolving or changing community needs and priorities.

Step 5: Check in on progress

Throughout the recovery process, CRCs should regularly check in on progress of recovery activities, and seek feedback from both CRC members, the community and external stakeholders on:

- **What is working well** — what actions and achievements were made individually or collectively that positively contributed to the recovery process?

- **Areas for improvement** — how can we improve to better support recovery activities?

- **Ongoing issues** — what issues will require ongoing work or attention?

By working through these questions with your CRC, together you will develop a shared understanding about your journey to date. It will also help bring to mind the many achievements to be recognised and celebrated.

A Progress Report (see below) can be used to help check in on your progress.

Focus	Answer
What is working well What actions and achievements were made individually or collectively that positively contributed to the recovery process?	(e.g. Community BBQ was a great opportunity to have a chat and check in on community members)
Areas for improvement How can we improve to better support our recovery activities?	(e.g. Strengthen communication from CRC back into the community through social media, flyers)
Ongoing issues What issues will require ongoing work or attention?	(e.g. Ongoing discussions with government agencies to re-open tourist sites)

Step 6: Plan & prepare

Any lessons learned from the disaster, or recovery process, should be captured and help to improve any existing emergency plans for the community. Documenting these lessons and reviewing existing plans will make sure communities are more resilient and prepared for future disasters.

The following pages provide guidance for CRCs to ensure they plan and prepare for future disasters, including evaluating the effectiveness of the overall recovery effort, and the succession and transition of a CRC.

> **TIP**
>
> Disaster recovery reviews or evaluations provide an opportunity to capture the experiences of community members, distil the lessons and use them to improve disaster recovery in the future. Find creative and engaging was to involve the community in disaster recovery review or evaluation processes.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the overall recovery effort

An evaluation of recovery operations can be helpful for CRCs and communities in understanding the effectiveness of recovery actions and the outcomes achieved for individuals and communities.

This is often referred to as an Outcome Evaluation. Outcome Evaluation considers the results of combined activity over a defined timeframe and answers the question: **To what extent have recovery goals been achieved?**

Some things to consider when conducting an evaluation include.

1. Engage with stakeholders: There are a number of stakeholders potentially interested in the progress of the disaster recovery and the findings of any recovery evaluation. Use the evaluation planning process to engage with and involve them.

2. Bring in evaluation experts: You might want to consider conducting the evaluation internally or engaging an external evaluator. This will be influenced by a range of factors, such as the availability of internal expertise and the nature and scale of the recovery activities.

Lessons learned and recommendations should be identified to support other communities impacted by future disasters and should be included as part of the evaluation process.

The following page provides an example Evaluation Template. Note that the evaluation can be used to evaluate a single action or set of actions in more detail.

Example evaluation framework

Purpose of the evaluation:

GOAL	MEASURES	INFORMATION	RESPONSIBLE	TIMEFRAME
(e.g. To ensure those affected by the disaster are provided with opportunities to reconnect with their communities.)	(e.g. Number of events; participation levels in community events; community perceptions of community connectedness.)	(e.g. Schedule of events; records of attendance; survey of community perceptions.)	(e.g. Community Development Officer.)	(e.g. Progress Report due December 2020; Final Report due June 2021.)
1.				

COMMUNICATION

(e.g. All stakeholders will be advised of intention to undertake the evaluation. Key stakeholders will be invited onto an Evaluation Reference Group. A presentation of key findings will be delivered to a senior executive group. A copy of the final report will be available to all stakeholders.)

RESOURCES

(e.g. The evaluation will be conducted internally, led by the Community Development Officer. $10,000 will be budgeted for the evaluation process.)

From: Benefits and limitations of community engagement methods, EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit, Book 8

Succession and transition of a CRC

The future of CRCs is largely in the hands of the CRC members, as well as critical stakeholders such as local council. A CRC will need to commence planning for the succession/transition of the activities being undertaken by the committee at an agreed point in time.

The timing of the succession and transition planning will be up to the circumstances of your CRC. CRCs may want to consider the following:

- declining/limited demand for recovery services and supports

- agreed tenure (length of time) of the CRC, if any

- completion or near completion of all actions as detailed in the Community Recovery Plan

- recognition that additional recovery activities have been completed.

TIP

A CRC plays a critical role in the transition process as the group is best able to establish priorities and provide information and advice on the community's emergency planning and preparedness.

Local council will also play a key role in the succession and transition of recovery to community planning and preparedness. CRCs should engage local council as a key partner in the succession/transition planning phase.

Succession and transition planning

When the time is right for your CRC, workshop within your CRC the best way to meet your community's ongoing needs into future emergency planning and preparedness.

Some questions you may want to ask include:

- What has the CRC achieved to date?

- What roles has the CRC had that are different to, or add value to, other groups in the community?

- Does the CRC need to continue to transition out of recovery?

- Is it timely for the CRC to transition out of community recovery?

- If the CRC no longer existed, what are the likely gaps? How would these gaps be filled?

- How can the local council support the transition and ongoing needs for community planning and preparedness?

5

Resources

Your local council is often the best initial source of information on community recovery and community planning. Some additional resources are listed below.

Bushfire Disaster Recovery Engagement Consultants

Organisations within the engagement community that are offering services pro bono to organisations needing assistance with engagement in disaster response and recovery.

- https://iap2.org.au/bushfire-disaster/engagement-consultants/

EMV Disaster Recovery Toolkit for Local Government

This toolkit provides a range of tools, resources and literature to help local councils and communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

- https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/disaster-recovery-toolkit-for-local-government

EMV Resilient Recovery Strategy

The EMV Resilient Recovery Strategy identifies strategic actions that promote a shared responsibility approach to emergency management and the importance of recovery planning.

- www.emv.vic.gov.au/how-we-help/resilient-recovery-strategy

Community Recovery Handbook, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

Provides detailed and comprehensive guidance. Part 3 of the handbook, 'Planning for Recovery' is likely to be most relevant in the early stages of recovery.

- https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-2-community-recovery/

Preparing for emergencies: A reference guide for organisations in the Health and Community Services Sectors

A guide to help health and community services organisations prepare for emergencies.

- https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/emergency-management

Victorian Public Engagement Framework (draft)

Principles and tips for engaging the public in a Victorian context.
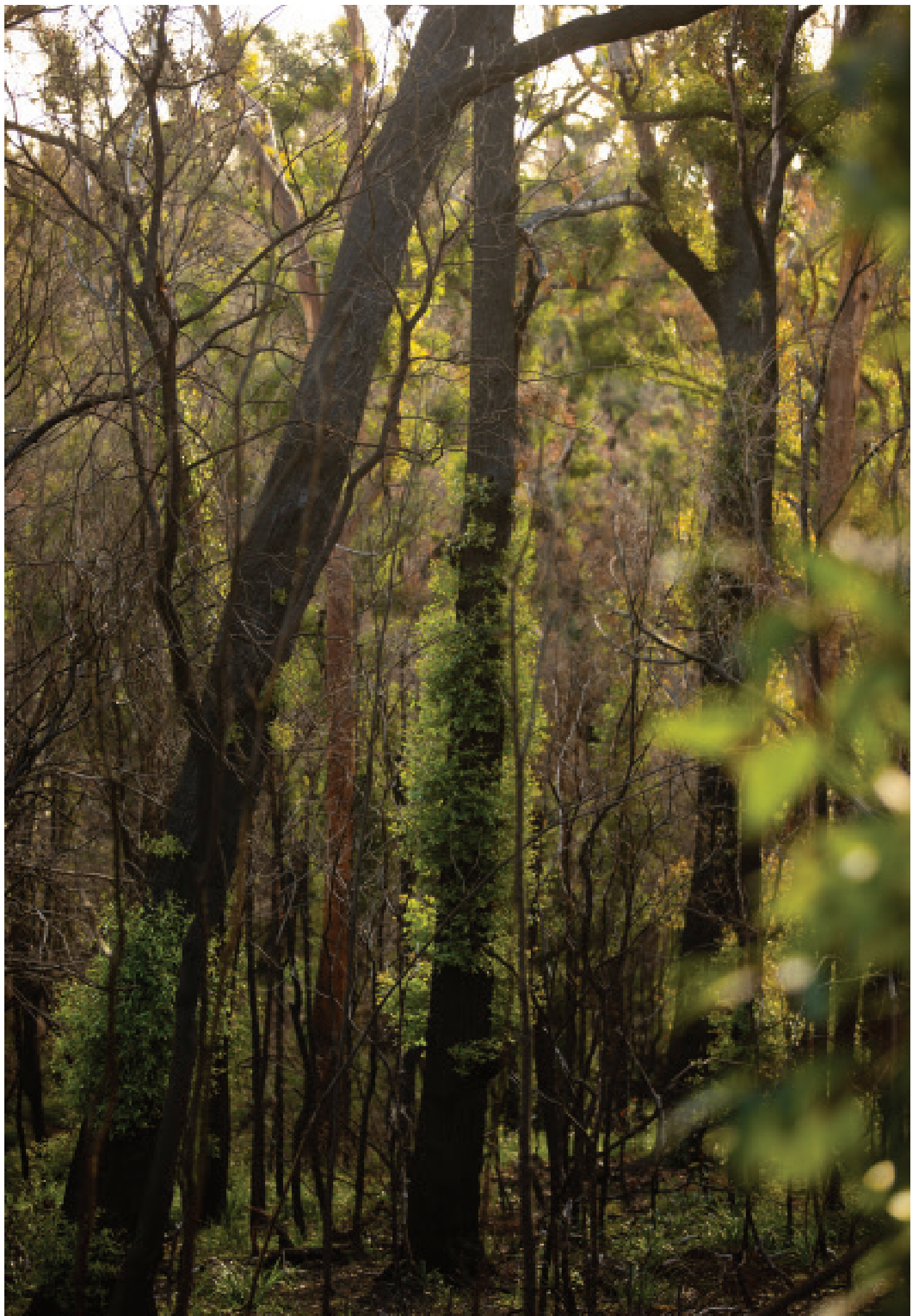
- www.engage.vic.gov.au/draft-public-engagement-framework

Bushfire Recovery Victoria and National Bushfire Recovery Agency websites

- www.brv.vic.gov.au
- www.bushfirerecovery.gov.au

Red Cross Community-led Resilience for Emergencies

A guide and toolkit for communities in building community resilience.

- www.redcross.org.au

**BUSHFIRE RECOVERY
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