



**Wollondilly**  
Shire Council

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# COMMUNITY RECOVERY HUB TOOLKIT

*A guide to establishing and operating  
a community recovery hub*



*Prepared for Wollondilly Shire Council by Leadbeater Group Pty Ltd*





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# INTRODUCTION COMMUNITY RECOVERY HUB TOOLKIT

Every year, communities around Australia face the devastating effects of emergencies and disasters such as drought, fires, floods, cyclones and severe storms that are increasing in their frequency and severity. The destruction of homes and property, disruption to businesses and local economies, and tragically, the injuries and lives lost as a result of such events can have significant impacts on local communities that can last for years.

One of the key findings to emerge from emergency management research and evaluation over the last decade has been the value of communities leading their own recovery. As noted in the national Community Recovery Handbook:

*Supporting self-help and strengthening the resources, capacity and resilience already present within individuals and communities are the keys to successful recovery. Empowering communities to create their own solutions can improve overall social cohesion and this is critical to sustainable recovery outcomes.<sup>1</sup>*

This toolkit builds on the experience of the communities of Wollondilly Shire, who, after the Green Wattle Creek bushfire in 2019-20, successfully established and operated a community recovery hub to support people directly and indirectly impacted by this significant disaster.

The toolkit draws on community information and reflections provided during a wide-ranging review of the Wollondilly community recovery hub model and it is hoped that the lessons learnt through that process will be of value to other communities in future.

The toolkit is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather, to encourage individual community groups and organisations to assess their own capacity to support the recovery of their community if an emergency or disaster were to occur. It contains information to help community organisations proactively consider and plan for the recovery needs of local people and to facilitate effective collaboration, communication and advocacy between their community and recovery services and stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup>Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook (AIDR 2018) p. 31



# USING THIS TOOLKIT

**Part 1** of the toolkit looks at ‘when disasters happen’ including definitions, emergency management arrangements and the role of Council and other recovery stakeholders. This section also includes the National Principles for Disaster Recovery and the purpose and key benefits of a community recovery hub.

**Part 2** examines the issues that need to be considered by any group who may decide to contribute to their community’s recovery by establishing and operating a community recovery hub. Included in this section are a series of planning questions that groups and organisations will need to answer for themselves as part of their planning process.

**Part 3** guides the establishment of a recovery hub once a disaster has occurred. It includes aspects of recovery that can be pre-planned to an extent, but which may also vary, depending on the type, scale, location and duration of the disaster.

**Part 4** explores key challenges that can be encountered in recovery such as donated goods, managing conflict and supporting people in distress.

**Part 5** looks at winding up a recovery hub and the transition to mainstream services, evaluation and continuous improvement.

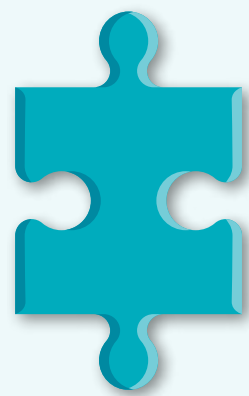
**Part 6** explores winding up a recovery hub, including assessing the progress of recovery, final reports, evaluation and continuous improvement.

**Part 7** provides links to useful resources.

**Part 8** contains a set of sample templates that can be adapted and used by community organisations to support the establishment and operation of a community recovery hub.



PLANNING QUESTIONS ARE  
IDENTIFIED WITH A STICKY NOTE



ACTION STEPS ARE IDENTIFIED  
WITH A PUZZLE PIECE

# RECOVERY HUB TRAINING

The toolkit is supported by a module of self-paced, online training that can be completed by members of community groups or organisations that may be interested in establishing and managing a community recovery hub. Having a member or members who have completed this training is a prerequisite for any community organisation to partner with Wollondilly Shire Council in the operation of a community recovery hub.



# PART 1

## WHEN DISASTERS HAPPEN

Emergencies and disasters can happen in any community and can often occur with little or no advance warning. They can range in scale from a few properties being impacted, to the lives and livelihoods of thousands of people being affected.

The following definitions are provided by the Australian Disaster Resilience Glossary:<sup>2</sup>

**Emergency:** An event, actual or imminent, which endangers or threatens to endanger life, property or the environment, and which requires a significant and coordinated response.

**Disaster:** A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.

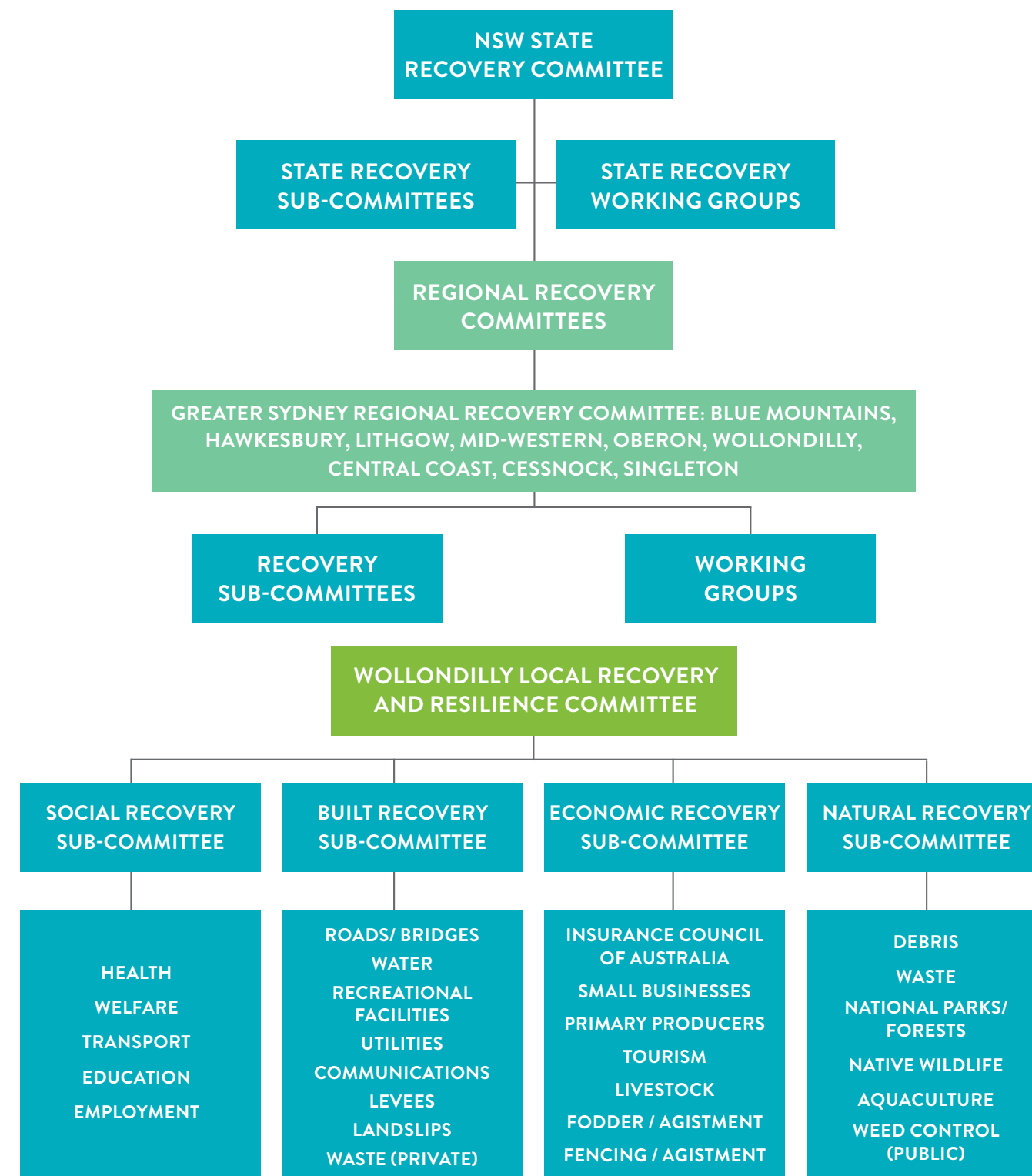
**Recovery:** The restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better”, to avoid or reduce future disaster risk.

When managing the impacts of emergencies and disasters, Wollondilly Shire Council is part of a broader state and regional recovery structure. Wollondilly Shire Council is part of the Greater Sydney Regional Recovery Committee. The structure of these internal and external recovery committees is as follows:



<sup>2</sup><https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/glossary/>

## DISASTER RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS



Social, Built, Economic and Natural Recovery Sub-Committees are enacted as needed. These are not ongoing committees.  
Source: Activate Wollondilly Long Term Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021.

A Community Recovery Hub operating within the Wollondilly LGA would connect with this framework via the Wollondilly Local Recovery and Resilience Committee.

The success of this recovery framework is reliant on the participation, collaboration and commitment of Council and the local community, together with a range of external recovery stakeholders.

WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL’S ROLE IN RECOVERY

Local Councils, in partnership with the State and Commonwealth governments, are responsible for contributing to the safety and wellbeing of their communities by participating in local emergency management and recovery efforts.

Council’s principal roles and responsibilities include:

- Building and promoting disaster resilience
- Systematically taking proper account of risk assessment in land-use planning to reduce hazard risk
- Representing community interests in emergency management to other spheres of government and contributing to decision-making processes
- Ensuring all requisite local emergency planning and preparedness measures are undertaken
- Ensuring an adequate local council emergency response capability is in place, including resources for the local volunteers
- Undertaking public education and awareness to support community-preparedness measures
- Participation in recovery operations including leading and participating in recovery committees and coordination
- Ensuring appropriate local resources and arrangements are in place to provide and support emergency relief and recovery services to communities
- Participating in post-emergency assessment and analysis
- Delivering services or activities to help restore the community, and
- Engaging with the community and stakeholders to support community-led recovery

The role of external recovery stakeholders

In addition to Wollondilly Shire Council and the local community, there are a number of external government and non-government organisations that play an essential role in community recovery. These stakeholders include:

- Utility and service providers (power, telecommunications, transport, clean-up)
- Non-government organisations (charities, peak bodies, chambers of commerce)
- The South-West Sydney Local Health District
- Services NSW
- Services Australia
- Legal and insurance services
- Networks and interagencies

Council will seek to work alongside and support external groups and organisations to undertake recovery and resilience building work in the Wollondilly Shire wherever possible.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Activate Wollondilly 2021 Long Term Community Recovery and Resilience Plan (Wollondilly Shire Council 2021)

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR RECOVERY

Recovery plans and activities within Wollondilly Shire are guided by the National Principles for Disaster Recovery. These nationally agreed principles describe best practice approaches for supporting and working with communities recovering from disasters.<sup>4</sup>

PRINCIPLE	PRACTICE
<p><b>UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT</b></p> <p>Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the community context, with each community having its own history, values and dynamics.</p>	<p>Recovery should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledge existing strengths and capacity, including past experiences;</li><li>• Appreciate the risks and stressors faced by the community;</li><li>• Be respectful of and sensitive to the culture and diversity of the community;</li><li>• Support those who may be facing vulnerability;</li><li>• Recognise the importance of the environment to people and to their recovery;</li><li>• Be acknowledged as requiring a long term sustained effort as needed by the community; and</li><li>• Acknowledge that the impact upon the community may extend beyond the geographical boundaries where the disaster occurred.</li></ul>
<p><b>RECOGNISE COMPLEXITY</b></p> <p>Successful recovery is responsive to the complex and dynamic nature of both emergencies and the community.</p>	<p>Recovery should recognise that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disasters lead to a range of effects and impacts that require a variety of approaches; they can also leave long-term legacies;</li><li>• Information on impacts is limited at first and changes over time;</li><li>• Affected individuals and the community have diverse needs, wants and expectations, which can evolve rapidly;</li><li>• Responsive and flexible action is crucial to address immediate needs;</li><li>• Existing community knowledge and values may challenge the assumptions of those outside of the community;</li><li>• Conflicting knowledge, values and priorities among individuals, the community and organisations may create tensions;</li><li>• Emergencies create stressful environments where grief or blame may also affect those involved; and</li><li>• Over time, appropriate support for individuals and communities, from within and outside, can cultivate hope, individual and collective growth.</li></ul>

<sup>4</sup>National Principles for Disaster Recovery (AIDR 2019)



<p><b>USE COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES</b></p> <p>Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward.</p>	<p>Recovery should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist and enable individuals, families and the community to actively participate in their own recovery;</li> <li>• Recognise that individuals and the community may need different levels of support at various times;</li> <li>• Be guided by the community’s priorities;</li> <li>• Channel effort through pre-identified and existing community assets, including local knowledge, existing community strengths and resilience;</li> <li>• Build collaborative partnerships between the community and those involved in the recovery process;</li> <li>• Recognise that new community leaders often emerge during and after a disaster, who may not hold formal positions of authority; and</li> <li>• Recognise that different communities may choose different paths to recovery.</li> </ul>
<p><b>COORDINATE ALL ACTIVITIES</b></p> <p>Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated approach between community and partner agencies, based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs.</p>	<p>Recovery should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have clearly articulated and shared goals based on desired outcomes;</li> <li>• Be flexible, taking into account changes in community needs or stakeholder expectations;</li> <li>• Be guided by those with experience and expertise, using skilled, authentic and capable community leadership;</li> <li>• Be at the pace desired by the community, and seek to collaborate and reconcile different interests and time frames;</li> <li>• Reflect well-developed community planning and information gathering before, during and after a disaster;</li> <li>• Have clear decision-making and reporting structures and sound governance, which are transparent and accessible to the community;</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and authority of organisations involved and coordinate across agencies to ensure minimal service provision disruption;</li> <li>• Be part of an emergency management approach that integrates with response operations and contributes to future prevention and preparedness; and</li> <li>• Be inclusive, availing of and building upon relationships created before, during and after the emergency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY</b></p> <p>Successful recovery is built on effective communication between the affected community and other partners.</p>	<p>Recovery should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that communication should be two-way, and that input and feedback should be encouraged;</li> <li>• Ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations, addresses a variety of communication needs, and is provided through a range of media and networks;</li> <li>• Establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communications between all service providers, organisations and individuals and the community;</li> <li>• Ensure that all communication is relevant, timely, clear, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent; and</li> <li>• Identify trusted sources of information and repeat key recovery messages to enable greater community confidence and receptivity.</li> </ul>

<p><b>RECOGNISE AND BUILD CAPACITY</b></p> <p>Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience.</p>	<p>Recovery should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess capability and capacity requirements before, during and after a disaster;</li> <li>• Support the development of self-reliance, preparation and disaster mitigation;</li> <li>• Quickly identify and mobilise community skills, strengths and resources;</li> <li>• Develop networks and partnerships to strengthen capacity, capability and resilience;</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to share, transfer and develop knowledge, skills and training;</li> <li>• Recognise that resources can be provided by a range of partners and from community networks;</li> <li>• Acknowledge that existing resources may be stretched, and that additional resources may be sought;</li> <li>• Understand that additional resources may only be available for a limited period, and that sustainability may need to be addressed;</li> <li>• Understand when and how to step back, while continuing to support individuals and the community as a whole to be more self-sufficient when they are ready; and</li> <li>• Be evaluated to provide learning for future and improved resilience.</li> </ul>
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### COMMUNITIES RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

When disasters happen, it is common for members of the community to be the first on scene, and to be organising and undertaking recovery activities even while response efforts are still underway. Residents and community organisations are able to quickly mobilise local knowledge, experience and capacity and to connect with neighbourhood networks and recovery stakeholders such as Council, NSW Reconstruction Authority, as well as response agencies such as Rural Fire Service and SES, and non-government organisations like Red Cross, Salvation Army, Anglicare, St Vincent de Paul and Landcare.

Local people will often have direct experience of previous emergencies and disasters in the area, as well as important insights about issues such as disruption to utilities (power, water, gas), flood water or debris resulting in road closures, local access to food, first aid and other needed supplies. While spontaneous responses by local community members provide an important contribution to disaster recovery, even more can be achieved when community groups consider, in advance, their capacity to establish and operate a community recovery hub.

## THE PURPOSE OF A COMMUNITY RECOVERY HUB

The key purpose of a community recovery hub is a place for people affected by a disaster to come together, to connect and to access recovery information, services and support.<sup>5</sup>

Community recovery hubs can facilitate local access to essential supplies such as water and grocery items, as well as psychosocial and practical support. A hub can help to improve communication and networking between the community and recovery agencies and facilitate the effective resolution of emerging issues. It can provide a central location for recovery services to establish a presence, and a welcoming, supportive place for impacted people to access multiple services and supports in one place, and within their own local area.

Importantly, a local recovery hub can mobilise community capacity, knowledge and skills to support those who have been affected by a disaster.



<sup>5</sup>Wollondilly Shire Council Recovery Hub Workshop Report 2020

## PART 2 PLANNING A COMMUNITY RECOVERY HUB

Disaster recovery is a dynamic, complex and time-critical environment that can be enormously challenging for individuals and communities, and for those who are working to support them. While there are many examples of recovery hubs being spontaneously established by communities in the immediate aftermath of disasters, there are important benefits to planning, in advance, how a hub should be established and for its effective operation. The following information is offered for community groups and organisations who may be considering their capacity to establish and operate a community recovery hub to support their community after a disaster.

### GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING

To successfully provide for the recovery needs of a community, a hub must be well-managed and have robust, transparent processes and clear lines of responsibility and accountability. It will be necessary for the group who will operate the hub to be responsible for the use of the proposed venue, to ensure there are sufficient volunteers, to make sure that people seeking assistance are supported and treated fairly and consistently, and to foster and maintain collaborative relationships with all recovery stakeholders. It will also be necessary to collect and share information about recovery needs and priorities, and to report on the operation of the hub to the community and other stakeholders.

Where a community group has an existing governance model or structure such as terms of reference or a constitution, it may be possible to apply and/or adapt this to the management of a recovery hub. Where this does not exist, it will be necessary to develop a governance plan to help guide the hub's operation for the duration of the recovery and through transition to the post-recovery stage.

#### Planning questions:

- Does our group have a formal governance structure that could support us to operate a recovery hub?
- If not, is there another community, regional or state-level organisation we could partner with? For example, a local neighbourhood house or community centre, residents' association, chamber of commerce, regional or state branch of Country Women's Association, Lions or Rotary?
- How will governance of the hub be managed? Will we establish a sub-committee of our group? How will decisions be made and communicated? How will the management of the hub be recorded and reported?





## CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING A RECOVERY HUB

Emergencies and disasters vary in terms of their scale and severity; some events may have a significant impact, but only over a small area, affecting perhaps one or two households, while in other examples, the impact can be experienced across multiple communities, with damage to tens, hundreds or even thousands of properties.

The extent and duration of the disruption caused by an emergency will also have a bearing on what support is needed. For example, roads closed for one or two days because of flooding or debris may not require the establishment of a recovery hub, whereas numbers of houses damaged or destroyed, and people displaced for days or weeks most certainly would.

In planning to operate a community recovery hub, it will be important to consider:

- The types of emergencies that may be experienced in your area
- The likely scale and duration of these kinds of events
- The numbers of homes and people likely to be affected, and
- Any complicating factors such as peak periods for tourists or seasonal workers.

[Council's Local Emergency Management Plan](#) can be a valuable source of information about the types of emergencies and disasters that may require the support of a community recovery hub.

In the event of an emergency or disaster that is significantly impacting the community, Wollondilly Shire Council will set up a Community Recovery Information Centre or CRIC and this may be a key indicator of the need for a community recovery hub to be established. Council may also use the Resilient Wollondilly mobile recovery van.

### Planning questions:

- *Do we understand the types of emergencies and disasters that may occur in our area and how long they are likely to last?*
- *How will we decide that a community recovery hub is needed in response to a particular event?*



## RECOVERY HUB VOLUNTEERS

The days and weeks following a disaster are a critical period for those who have been affected, and people may feel overwhelmed by their experiences and overcome by grief, distress and uncertainty. A community recovery hub can play a vital role in providing comfort, assistance and access to essential information and services, but to achieve these outcomes it will need the ongoing support of suitably experienced and/or trained volunteers.

A key consideration in planning to operate a recovery hub is how the required levels of staffing can be maintained. It is common to experience a surge of volunteer assistance in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, and this can be helpful in managing the demands of this peak period, but a recovery hub may need to operate for weeks or months. It is also possible that key volunteers from your organisation or the broader community may also be impacted by the disaster and may therefore be unavailable to

help. It can be challenging to ensure that there are enough people to share the responsibilities and workload over an extended period.

It is also essential to consider the suitability of volunteers and their own welfare and wellbeing. Some volunteers may not be well-suited to working on the 'frontline' of a disaster with people who are experiencing significant levels of anger or distress. Other volunteers may be excellent frontline workers but working in recovery for long hours can result in the potential for burn-out or even vicarious trauma.

It is not possible to know, in advance, exactly how many people will need support from a recovery hub, or how many people will be available to help. However, it is worth thinking carefully about how existing members of your group and other potential hub volunteers can be identified, recruited and trained, and whether there are other groups or organisations with whom you could partner, to ensure you have a large enough pool of volunteers from which to draw.

### Planning questions:

- *How many members of our group and/or other community members could help to manage a recovery hub?*
- *How many members of our group would be willing to complete recovery hub training online?*
- *If a hub is needed for an extended period, would our group have capacity, or who else could we partner with?*



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To successfully operate a community recovery hub, it will be necessary to clearly establish roles and responsibilities and to identify suitable volunteers to undertake key roles for the duration of the recovery.

### SUGGESTED ROLES:

#### Recovery Hub Managers

Oversee the smooth running of the hub including policies and procedures, rosters, health and safety, welfare of volunteers, access to equipment and supplies, and managing disputes and grievances.

It is recommended that two people be appointed to share the role of Recovery hub Manager. In the early stages, the hub may need to operate for long periods each day to provide the required support, and its operation may continue for weeks or even months after the disaster. Having two people share the manager role will mean they can provide support to each other in this important work and will help to ensure the sustainability of the hub.

#### Coordinator Communications

Establishing and maintaining communication channels with the community, supporting the availability of timely, accurate information about the hub and its services, and providing a conduit for information from the community to the Recovery Hub team and other stakeholders.

#### Coordinator Community Response

Access to local knowledge and resources, coordinating spontaneous volunteers, coordinating the receipt of donated goods and services, and where this is not being done by another agency or service, their fair and equitable distribution.



### **Coordinator Finance**

Managing donated funds and expenses relating to the operation of the hub, approved reimbursement of expenses, identifying funding opportunities and applying for grants, maintaining financial records and reporting.

### **Administration Officer(s)**

Providing administrative assistance to support the efficient running of the hub. Two people may need to share this role to ensure the required administration support is available and can be maintained over the time that the hub operates.

In addition, volunteers who can help out with tasks such as cleaning, organising supplies and donations and meeting people as they come into the hub will also be helpful.

Depending on the scale and duration of the recovery, not all of these roles may be required. They may also be established over time, rather than all being in place at the outset. In some instances, one or more of the roles may be undertaken by one person, or shared among a small group of people, however, it will be important to identify who has ultimate responsibility and accountability for each area of operation.

Thinking about the types of volunteers who could undertake these roles, it will be useful to consider people who are:

- Calm and practical, particularly in stressful situations
- Open, honest, fair and ethical
- Able to relate to a wide range of people
- Empathetic and understanding of the effects of trauma
- Able to negotiate and problem-solve
- Energetic and positive
- Reliable and organised
- Well-respected in the community
- Discreet and trustworthy
- Physically and mentally fit
- Self-reliant and able to monitor and manage their own wellbeing, and
- May have relevant emergency management training and/or experience.

Running a Community Recovery Hub is a significant amount of work, requiring people who are enthusiastic and committed to the local community, with a demonstrated capacity for sustained effort and perseverance and who are able to achieve outcomes. It is important that recovery hub team members are able to seek and receive support from Council and other agencies as needed and to take time away from their role(s) to rest and recharge, or indeed, to step down from their role to work on their own recovery, if required. Groups will also need to consider how running a recovery hub will impact on their usual group activities. For example, a group who runs the local community market may need to consider postponing these events, at least in the initial stages of recovery, so they can focus on operating the hub.

### **Planning questions:**

- *Do we have volunteers who can undertake the roles required to run a recovery hub?*
- *Can their involvement be sustained for the duration of the hub's operations?*
- *What training and support will volunteers need and how can this be provided?*
- *How will we manage the workload of running a recovery hub on top of our day-to-day operations?*





## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A key area of responsibility in running a community recovery hub is effective financial management and record keeping. Funds may be provided to meet the costs associated with the day-to-day running of the hub, or for specific and/or one-off expenses. In addition, donations of money, goods and services may be made via the hub to support people who have been affected by the disaster. It will be critical that funds and donations are managed consistently, fairly and transparently, and that accurate records of expenditure are maintained.

Groups who are planning to run a recovery hub must consider how they will ensure good financial management. For example, it should be clear who has authority to make financial decisions, whether funds will be received by the group on behalf of the recovery effort, and how people's recovery needs can be met equitably, fairly and without bias or conflict of interest.

There will likely be a need to produce financial reports to assist with the overall management of recovery operations and to assist with claims for reimbursement of funds used in support of the recovery effort.

It may be most appropriate to partner with another organisation or agency who can help with financial management. The Wollondilly Shire Council Mayoral Relief Fund is established to receive and manage cash donations and to ensure financial support can be provided quickly to those who need it, while organisations such as Salvation Army, Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and GIVIT are experienced in assessing the needs of disaster-affected people and receiving, managing and distributing funds and donated goods.

### Planning questions:

- *Does our group have someone experienced in financial management who could provide this support to the Recovery Hub?*
- *Does our group have access to audited financial accounts through which cash donations and other funds can be managed – or will we partner with another organisation or service provider who will manage funds on behalf of our group?*
- *Who will have financial authority to receive funds and authorise expenditure?*
- *Who will be responsible for financial records and reporting?*



## INSURANCE AND RESOURCES

A community group or organisation that is planning to run a recovery hub will need to ensure that it has the required insurance coverage to protect the organisation and its members, eg. public liability insurance and volunteer insurance. This cover may be provided under the group's existing insurance, or it may need to be obtained as additional cover. Consideration will be needed about the level of cover to be provided to volunteers – for example, will volunteers be covered personally for losses relating to accidents and injuries that may happen to them, or only for indemnity against claims of negligence or liability made against them by someone else.

### Planning questions:

- *Does our existing insurance cover us to run a recovery hub?*
- *If not, can we obtain the required insurance and meet any additional cost?*
- *What level of cover will we provide for hub volunteers?*



## SUPPORT FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Councils have a range of responsibilities in recovery and will be working to support all affected communities within the local government area. Wollondilly Shire Council is committed to working with community groups who want to proactively plan to operate a recovery hub and may be able to provide a range of support, such as:

- Access to a Council-owned and/or managed facility
- Loan of equipment and provision of supplies
- Access to information
- Assistance with communication and administration
- Communication to the community and other stakeholders about the hub and its role
- Access to counselling or mental-health support

Working with Council during the planning stage, prior to any disaster occurring, can help to clearly establish the level of support Council will be able to provide the hub and create the opportunity to build relationships with key Council contacts who will support the group during recovery.



## SUPPORT FROM RECOVERY AGENCIES

There is a broad range of organisations operating at the local, regional, state and commonwealth level who, depending on the type of disaster and level of impact, may have recovery responsibilities for events that occur within your community.

Non-government organisations, service clubs, charities and faith-based organisations, industry peak bodies, chambers of commerce, and government agencies may all be involved in supporting communities following a disaster.

The co-location of a range of services at a recovery hub can make it much easier for impacted people to identify and access the help they need and can improve communication and information-sharing between services and the community.

Again, it is important to consider and plan for how a range of different service providers can be accommodated at a hub and what support they can contribute. For example, if an agency is planning to establish a presence at the hub, will they provide their own table(s), chair(s), brochure stands/display equipment, signage? Can your group benefit by having access to the recovery experience and expertise these organisations may have? Can you, in turn, provide relevant local knowledge and experience to organisations from outside the area?

As part of the process to establish a recovery hub, you should make contact with Council who can connect you with other recovery agencies who will be working to support your community in recovery.

### Planning questions:

- *Who are our key recovery contacts in Council and when will we meet with them?*
- *How will we engage with other recovery stakeholders?*
- *What help and advice do we need from Council and recovery agencies?*
- *What support and local knowledge can we contribute to other organisations?*
- *Will establishing memorandum of understanding (MOU) help to support collaboration and formalise arrangements between our group, Council and other recovery agencies?*



## MANAGING RISK

There are a number of complex risks to be considered when planning to establish and operate a recovery hub. These can generally be grouped into three main categories:

**Risks that relate to the disaster** – these may include being able to identify a safe location for the hub; not having access to utilities (power, water, telecommunications); needing to manage the effects of poor air and/or water quality or access issues caused by blocked or unsafe roads. Consideration will also need to be given to accessibility to toilets and parking.

**Risks that relate to the operation of the hub** – for example, not having enough suitable volunteers; ineffective relationships with other response and recovery stakeholders; not being able to access and disseminate information; needing to manage confidentiality; receiving, storing and dealing with donations; or risks associated with pets and companion animals at the hub.

**Risks that relate to people** – such as the need to manage grief, anger and high emotion; being unable to support people with special needs or specific cultural or religious requirements; people who are physically unable to access the facility; dealing with conflict, including family violence; or being unable to adequately brief, debrief and support hub volunteers.

The exact nature and potential impact of these risks cannot be predicted and will vary in relation to the type, location and severity of the disaster. However, it is worth considering how many potential risks can be identified in advance, and how those risks can be mitigated. A risk management matrix template is included in [Part 8](#) of this toolkit.





## VOLUNTEER SAFETY AND WELLBEING

People working to support recovery, whether paid or unpaid, need to have a safe, supportive work environment. As the disaster will probably have impacted their own community, it is important to remember that community volunteers may experience additional stress as a result. For example, volunteers may have been impacted by the disaster themselves, or will most likely know people who have been directly affected, and this may include their own family and friends. In addition, and in contrast to people for whom recovery is their job, it is likely that community volunteers will also be working to manage their own day-to-day work and community responsibilities as well as helping with recovery.

Clear processes are needed to guide the operation of the hub. Ensuring that volunteers are provided with a comprehensive induction, are briefed at the beginning of each shift, and are provided with regular opportunities to debrief can help to reduce distress and support wellbeing. Volunteers are often motivated to work for long periods to support their communities, so fatigue management is an important strategy for the effective, sustainable running of the hub. There should be a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying or abuse and problems that arise should be dealt with in a transparent, fair and timely way.

As part of running a community recovery hub it is important to be able to recognise and respond to common individual and community responses to trauma.<sup>6</sup>

### For individuals, these can include:

- Hypervigilance, feeling the need to be on 'high alert' for further risk
- Feeling detached or disconnected from others and/or their own situation
- Being emotionally upset or, conversely, feeling emotionally numb, as if in a state of shock
- Feeling fearful, stressed, overwhelmed, helpless, hopeless, anxious and/or angry
- Experiencing extreme fatigue
- Feeling highly connected to, and extremely protective of others, including family, friends and pets
- Experiencing the re-emergence of symptoms and responses relating to previous instances of trauma
- Feelings of 'survivor guilt' and isolation
- Increased incidence of substance abuse
- Increased incidence of family violence.

### Community responses to trauma can include:

- A breakdown, whether temporary or long-term, of existing community networks and structures
- A condition of 'hyperbonding' that sees new patterns of connection within the impacted community in response to a shared experience of the disaster
- The potential for parochialism and the formation of virtual community 'boundaries' that exclude outsiders
- The potential for 'survivor envy' that may emerge during community recovery/rebuilding.

In working to support recovery, vicarious trauma can be experienced by people who have not been directly impacted by the disaster, as a result of working with and hearing the experiences of those who are.<sup>7</sup>

Where signs of individual or community trauma are observed, it will be important to seek advice and support from a specialist organisation such as [Australian Red Cross](#), which has considerable experience supporting recovery volunteers.

Self-care is a critical aspect of working in recovery and volunteers should be encouraged to monitor and manage their own wellbeing. Actions such as eating well, getting adequate rest, maintaining connections with family and friends, and taking time away from recovery activities to rest and recharge can be important strategies to manage fatigue and maintain health and wellbeing. These approaches will help to ensure the sustainable involvement of volunteers and should be encouraged and modelled by everyone involved in running the hub.

**Part 7** of this toolkit includes a range of resources that can support volunteer safety and wellbeing.

## COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

Disaster recovery is an inherently complex and emotionally charged environment in which differences of opinions and complaints can arise. These can quickly escalate if they are not dealt with efficiently, adding additional anger and distress to an already stressful situation.

As part of the effective management of the hub, there should be an open, accessible and consistent complaints process that can be used by anyone needing to have an issue resolved. This process should include different ways to raise a complaint or grievance to ensure that people are not required to raise their issue with the person it may concern. A grievance process should also set out clear timelines for action to be undertaken and the matter to be resolved.

A template for a sample grievance process is included in **Part 8** of this toolkit.

<sup>6</sup> *Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook 12 Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers (AIDR 2017)* <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-spontaneous-volunteers/>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*



## PART 3 ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY RECOVERY HUB

The following information relates to the establishment of a recovery hub once a disaster has occurred. It includes aspects of recovery that can be pre-planned to an extent, but which may also vary, depending on the type, scale, location and duration of the disaster.

### COORDINATING WITH COUNCIL

The first step in establishing a community recovery hub is to make contact with Council. As detailed in **Part 1** of this toolkit, Wollondilly Shire Council has a range of responsibilities to support disaster recovery and will also have access to up-to-date information about the location, scale and impacts of a disaster event, and the contact information and proposed actions of other recovery stakeholders. Working closely with Council in the establishment of a recovery hub will help to minimise confusion, avoid duplication of effort and ensure the best outcomes for the affected communities.

Wollondilly Shire Council has established the role of *Local Recovery Coordinator* to provide practical assistance and advice, and to maximise collaboration between Council and communities during and after emergencies and disasters. The Local Recovery Coordinator can be contacted by calling (02) 4677 1100 or by email: [recovery@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au](mailto:recovery@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au).

#### Action Steps:

- Contact Wollondilly Shire Council's Local Recovery Coordinator on (02) 4677 1100 or email [recovery@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au](mailto:recovery@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au)
- Find out about the scale of the event and the areas affected by, and/or likely to be affected by the disaster.





## CHOOSING A LOCATION

There are a number of important considerations when deciding where to establish a recovery hub. These include (but are not limited to):

- Whether a proposed location could also be impacted by the disaster
- What the proposed facility is normally used for, and whether its usual activities can be relocated or postponed for the duration of the hub's operation (which may be for several weeks or months)
- Who has management responsibilities for the facility? For example, is it the same group that will establish the hub? Or another group or organisation? Or is it a Council-owned or managed facility? What arrangements are needed to be able to use the facility?
- Over what period the facility can be used, and whether there are any fees associated with its use
- Whether the facility is of sufficient size to meet the needs of the community
- The amenities available at the proposed location, e.g., accessible to people with disability, toilets/showers, cooking facilities, meeting spaces, sufficient area for car parking, telephone and internet connection, etc. For information on how to ensure your venue and resources are accessible you can refer to the [\*NSWDPC Toolkit for Accessible and Inclusive Events\*](#).

### Action Steps:

- *In consultation with Council, identify the most suitable location for the establishment of a recovery hub, taking into consideration the location of affected areas and any impact on utilities and infrastructure.*
- *Engage with the group or organisation that manages the preferred facility to negotiate its use.*

## EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

The equipment and supplies required may vary depending on the type, scale and location of the disaster, the number of people affected, and the type of facility in which the hub is established. For example, in a large-scale event that has displaced people from their homes, a decision may be taken to provide additional portable showers and toilets to supplement what is available at the hub location. However, in the case of a smaller event, the existing facilities may be sufficient.

The range of equipment and supplies required in the hub may include:

- Tables and chairs
- Noticeboards
- Potable water
- Tea and coffee-making facilities
- Refrigerator
- Telephone and internet access
- Portable public address (PA) system
- Radio and/or television

- Computer, laptop or similar device(s)
- Printer/photocopier
- Signage
- First aid kit
- Cleaning equipment and supplies
- Stationery (pens, paper, tape, folders, notebooks, photocopy paper, etc)
- Stands for displaying leaflets, newsletters and brochures
- Shelving (fixed or demountable)
- Access to temporary storage, for example shedding or shipping containers

Consideration will need to be given to the associated costs and their funding sources to meet any expenses.

### Action Steps:

- *Take a note of available equipment and supplies and any additional resources that may be needed.*
- *Work with recovery partners and donors to obtain required equipment and supplies.*



# PART 4

## OPERATING A COMMUNITY RECOVERY HUB

The following information relates to the operation of a recovery hub once it has been established. Again, this information relates to aspects of recovery that can be pre-planned to an extent, but which may also vary, depending on the type, scale, location and duration of the disaster.

### COORDINATING VOLUNTEERS

As detailed in **Part 2**, having enough suitable and appropriately trained volunteers is critical to the successful operation of a community recovery hub. When a disaster occurs, it will be necessary to mobilise volunteers to help establish and operate the hub. It is common to experience a surge of assistance and offers of help initially, which can often exceed what is required. This can quickly taper off to such an extent that there is not enough help available to effectively support recovery. This situation can result in a small number of people working for long hours without a break, which can increase the risk of trauma and burnout.

Matching the skills and availability of volunteers with the roles to be undertaken and establishing rosters to ensure there are sufficient volunteers to operate the hub are important elements in successfully coordinating volunteers. A sample roster template is included in **Part 8** of this toolkit.

#### Action Steps:

- *Decide how many volunteers are likely to be needed to set up the Hub and to operate for the required number of hours/days per week.*
- *Contact existing volunteers and consider whether additional help can be sought from other community organisations, if required.*
- *Appoint people to the required roles, as detailed in **Part 2**.*
- *Develop a roster of volunteers to ensure there are enough people available and volunteers know when they will be needed.*



### CRITERIA FOR ASSISTANCE

Depending on the scale of the disaster and the types of services and support that will be offered, it may be necessary to establish criteria for people to receive assistance. This may be needed to ensure support is provided in an equitable way; to prevent the Hub from being overwhelmed by people seeking assistance; and to help manage the workload for volunteers.

For example, it may be decided that a person needs to be a resident of a defined local area, or for their property to have sustained a certain level of damage to access services at the hub. Where criteria for assistance are determined, they must be clear and unambiguous, be well understood by everyone working at the hub, be applied in a fair and consistent way, and be clearly communicated to all residents.

It is important to understand that people can be impacted by a disaster even though their property has not been directly affected, and that comfort, reassurance and access to information should be available to anyone who needs it. In the case where criteria for assistance are being applied, information about alternative sources of help and referrals to other recovery agencies should be provided.

#### Action Steps:

- *Decide, based on the scale and impacts of the disaster, whether criteria for assistance will be needed to ensure equitable access to support and to manage volunteer workload.*
- *Decide on the criteria and make sure they can be applied fairly and consistently. Ensure that they are well understood by everyone working at the hub, and that they are clearly communicated to residents.*
- *Identify alternative sources of support and ensure this information is provided to anyone who does not qualify for assistance.*
- *Remember that comfort, reassurance and access to information must be available to anyone, regardless of their circumstances.*





## MANAGING INFORMATION

Having access to accurate, relevant, up to date information is vital for people who have been affected by a disaster. Managing communication and information is one of the most critical aspects of operating a recovery hub.

In the early stages of recovery, people will need information about how they can meet their immediate needs for essential supplies, first aid, temporary accommodation, reconnecting with family and friends, caring for pets and livestock, and returning to their property when they are able to do so.

As recovery progresses, information about grants and donations, insurance, accessing counselling or personal support, supporting children and young people, rebuilding advice, managing environmental impacts, and business re-establishment may be needed.

The hub will also have information needed by Council and other agencies to support recovery planning and service delivery. For example, the number of people in the area directly and indirectly affected by the disaster, numbers of people seeking assistance and the types of recovery support they need, offers of help and donations made to the hub, as well as recovery needs that may emerge or evolve over time.

Managing information is further complicated by the rapidly changing nature of recovery. A piece of information that was current or a process that was in use yesterday may not be so today. It is critical to have strategies in place that will support people to get the most current and relevant information available, at the time that they need to access it.

In the early stages of recovery, a useful strategy for ensuring up to date information for volunteers and people impacted by the disaster is to provide regular in-person briefings at pre-determined times. Initially, these may be required twice a day, at say 10.00am and 4.00pm, then reducing to once a day when the most urgent aspects of recovery have been addressed.

Recovery briefings should be as concise as possible, focusing on the most relevant information and with particular emphasis on any new or changed information or processes. Briefings should include the opportunity for people attending to ask questions and it can be helpful to have a range of recovery stakeholders represented who can respond directly with information and advice. It should be possible to live-stream briefings via social media for those who are unable to attend, or who may need to access the information at a different time. Another useful strategy is to set up a 'What's New' noticeboard to highlight new or changed information as a quick reference point for residents and volunteers.

Daily briefings can be supported with the use of noticeboards, social media posts, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and recovery newsletters. Consideration should be given to the way people usually communicate within the community – for example, a local paper or magazine, community Facebook page, school newsletter – and those familiar methods should be used wherever possible.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

A common frustration for people affected by a disaster is the requirement to repeatedly provide their personal information and details about how they have been impacted in order to receive assistance from a range of recovery services and organisations.

In a similar way, recovery organisations are often frustrated by not being able to access a comprehensive list of affected people to contact. While sharing information is important in understanding the impact of the disaster and facilitating recovery support, it is also critical that the confidentiality of individuals is respected and maintained.

A way to overcome this challenge may be to ask people who want to access services via the hub to complete a registration form. This form would record their details and their permission, if granted, to share the information contained on the form with other recovery agencies for the purpose of facilitating their access to services and support. A template for a sample registration form is included in [Part 8](#) of this toolkit.

It may also be helpful to develop a checklist of available services that people can use to keep a record of the services they have contacted and those with which they are still to connect. A 'Services Contacted' checklist can make it easier to keep track of new and existing sources of support in recovery, at a complex and stressful time. A sample checklist of services contacted is included in [Part 8](#) of this toolkit.

Hub managers, staff and volunteers should consider the signing of a Confidentiality Agreement.



## WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

In the aftermath of a disaster, 'the media' (i.e., people working to report on the event and its impacts) can be a valuable resource in helping to share information about the effects of the emergency within and beyond the impacted community. Media reports can help to highlight the needs of people who have been affected and to correct misinformation that can flourish if not addressed. Unfortunately, the media can also be the source of misinformation. To ensure that reporting is accurate, it can be useful to work with the media by providing up to date information and statistics and introductions or referrals to other recovery stakeholders.

The privacy of impacted people and volunteers is paramount and must be protected at all times. Good working relationships with the media can make this easier to achieve by establishing boundaries and requiring ethical and empathetic approaches. Some people affected by disasters are keen to tell their stories or to have their photograph taken, while others are not. It may be possible to help people reporting on the disaster to connect with those who would like to talk about their experiences by setting up a dedicated area in proximity to the hub, from which journalists and media practitioners can operate.

Consideration should be given to the appointment of spokespeople who are authorised to speak to the media and other stakeholders (e.g. politicians, major donors or VIPs) about the hub and its operations. For example, the duties of a spokesperson may be included in the role of the Recovery Hub Manager and the Coordinator of Communications, with any formal requests for information or interviews being referred to the people undertaking these roles. This can help to ensure consistency of messaging and avoid disseminating information that is conflicting or not up to date.

Section 4 of the Australian Red Cross resource [Communicating in Recovery](#) has a section on working with the media. Council's communication staff may also be able to offer valuable support.

### Action Steps:

- *Develop a process to manage information, including regular communication and updates for volunteers and the community.*
- *Develop a process to register people who are seeking assistance, and to share information in ways that support recovery and ensure that confidentiality is respected and maintained.*
- *Develop a checklist for people to record the services they have accessed. Consider storing these securely at the hub if people would find that helpful.*
- *Appoint media spokespeople for the hub and consider how to work most effectively with the media.*



## KEEPING RECORDS

Keeping accurate, comprehensive records is an important part of accountability when running a recovery hub. Decisions about what help can be provided, whether donations will be accepted by the hub and how they will be distributed, how resources and supplies are used, and how money is spent may all be subject to scrutiny and review. Having accurate records can help to support and validate decisions, and identify lessons learnt and future opportunities for improvement.

Consideration should be given to the long term storage of records as all records need to be kept for up to 7 years.

### Action Steps:

- *Decide what records are required and how they will be kept, for example, donations register (cash and goods) so letters of thanks can be sent, a register of volunteers, volunteer rosters, an inventory of equipment (and whether owned or borrowed), minutes of meetings, key points from daily briefings, financial records, health and safety reports, records of complaint or grievance.*
- *Decide who has responsibility for recording information (for example, this may be part of one or more of the roles set out in **Part 2**) and for verifying and validating records (for example, the Recovery Hub Manager).*
- *Decide where and how records will be stored and who will have access.*







## PART 5

# KEY CHALLENGES

There are several areas of disaster recovery which, over time, can prove to be particularly complex and demanding. If not well-managed, these aspects of recovery can see deep divisions created within communities and cause significant additional distress for those affected by the disaster. The following information explores the most common of these key challenges.

### DONATIONS OF MONEY, GOODS AND SERVICES

One of the inevitable ways that communities seek to support people who have been affected by a disaster is by making donations. These can be in the form of money, either donated directly to the affected person or community, or via an appeal fund; new or second-hand goods (also known as material aid); or the provision of free or discounted services.

Generally, these donations are well-intentioned and they can provide considerable comfort and assistance to people in their recovery. In practical terms, however, they can be extremely difficult to manage.

Receiving and distributing cash donations can create a significant burden for the hub in terms of record-keeping and ensuring equity and transparency. It is also very difficult to distribute donations of cash in an equitable way, when there can be no way to predict how much money will be donated overall.

Experience shows that donated goods will consist of things that are useful and needed by people in recovery, as well as things which are not useful, not fit for purpose or not needed. In addition, the volume of donated goods and the work involved to receive, sort, store and distribute them can quickly overwhelm recovery hub volunteers. The common experience of there not being enough of a specific item to provide one for every affected family or household, e.g. corporate donations of new refrigerators or televisions, is a further complexity which can be a source of considerable anger and disappointment for those who miss out.

Donations of services can be useful if the timing is appropriate. For example, an offer to draw house plans on a pro bono basis, or a donation of a free holiday can be of benefit if the offer is made at a time that it can be utilised. However, donations of services may not be available at the time when they can be taken up by the proposed recipient and again, can be difficult to distribute equitably given that the value of the offers is likely to vary.

As part of the effective running of the hub, decisions will be needed about how donations will be managed. A Mayoral Relief Fund such as the one established by Wollondilly Shire Council will provide a solution for cash donations, while donated goods and services should be directed to organisations such as GIVIT, Salvation Army or St Vincent de Paul, who have experience receiving and distributing material aid.

## WORKING WITH PEOPLE IN DISTRESS

Whether you are directly or indirectly affected, living through a disaster can be intensely distressing and people may react in a range of ways. Depending on the degree of impact they experience, some people may become withdrawn and may be reluctant to seek or accept help; others may experience a sense of denial, or feel overwhelmed by grief or despair; while for some people, feelings of anger, impatience or fear and uncertainty may predominate.

People in distress will likely find it difficult to take in and remember information, to effectively 'weigh up' different options and to problem solve, and this can further complicate their ability to access support in recovery.

Working with large numbers of people who are experiencing high levels of emotional distress can be challenging for hub volunteers who, themselves, may be feeling many similar emotions and who may also be fatigued from working long hours to support recovery.

While bullying, abusive or aggressive behaviour should not be tolerated, hub volunteers will need to recognise and understand that the anger and frustration that is expressed by survivors commonly relates to their experience of the disaster rather than with people who are working to help them in their recovery. It is important not to become defensive and to recognise that people who are experiencing high emotion themselves cannot reduce the high emotion. Hub volunteers will need to work hard to maintain a calm and supportive environment in which people feel comfortable sharing their experiences and seeking support.

Information about working with people in distress can be found in the Australian Red Cross guide, [\*Psychological First Aid: Supporting people affected by disaster in Australia\*](#). Red Cross also provides training in psychological first aid (PFA) for recovery practitioners and community volunteers, and Lifeline provides Accidental Counsellor<sup>8</sup> training aimed at providing skills and strategies to support people who are in distress or experiencing a crisis.

## MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict can arise during recovery for a range of reasons. There may be tensions between community groups about recovery priorities, access to grant funding or expenditure; people can become frustrated due to delays or because they feel that they have been treated unfairly; inequitable access to donated goods can result in complaints; or disagreements can arise regarding people's different circumstances, for example, property lost versus property undamaged, insured versus uninsured, conflict of interest relating to the awarding of recovery contracts, and so on. It is also possible that pre-existing tensions within the community can be exacerbated by the effects of the disaster.

Being exposed to ongoing conflict or disagreement can be especially difficult for hub volunteers who may feel discouraged or begin to question their contribution to the work of recovery.

It is important to remember that communities are complicated and dynamic, and people do not all agree with each other in ordinary times. In considering the impact of disasters and the possibility for conflict within communities, the national Community Recovery Handbook notes the following:<sup>9</sup>

The effects of a disaster on an impacted community are compounded by the nature of the disaster and of the community itself, as well as complex considerations such as human behaviour and relationships and the evolving needs of recovery. In working with the affected community, suggestions for recovery managers include:

- Be as inclusive as possible in identifying and assessing the 'affected' community.
- Recognise that significant impacts can be experienced by those not considered 'directly affected'.
- Remember that not everyone who is affected will live in the same area.
- Understand that people will not all respond or react in the same way.
- Plan collaboratively with the community.
- Tailor and adapt plans to meet changing community needs.
- Identify and work through community leaders.
- Reinforce shared responsibility between all sectors of the community.

The potential for conflict in recovery can be reduced by ensuring hub policies and procedures are clear, consistent and well-understood by volunteers. It is critically important that disagreements or complaints are dealt with transparently and in a timely way, and the Hub Manager and volunteers should actively monitor any potential for conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, and take action to resolve them. Keeping a record of issues and how they are resolved will help to support any review of the decisions made and to facilitate continuous improvement for the future. A template to record issues management is included in [Part 8](#) of this toolkit.

Section 1.2 of the [\*Community Recovery Handbook\*](#) also provides information about disaster-affected communities and the nature of recovery work.

<sup>8</sup>Lifeline Accidental Counsellor <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-involved/workplace-training/accidental-counsellor/>

<sup>9</sup>Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook (AIDR 2018) p.6



## SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

Working in recovery can provide opportunities to apply existing capacity and local knowledge and to learn new skills, and although challenging, it can prove to be an immensely rewarding experience. However, it must also be acknowledged that recovery work is undertaken in complex, stressful and often rapidly-changing environments that are characterised by high emotion, distress and fatigue. In such difficult environments, the importance of providing effective support to volunteers cannot be overstated.

There are a range of strategies that can provide support to people working in recovery, including:

- Ensuring people have the information and resources they need to operate effectively
- Encouraging people not to work beyond their shifts and to take time away from their role to de-stress and recharge
- Providing adequate opportunities to talk through challenges, seek advice and to debrief about difficult or distressing experiences
- Celebrating progress in recovery by observing milestones and achievements, both large and small
- Making sure the contribution to recovery, and the value and impact of volunteers is appreciated and acknowledged.

The Volunteering Australia [\*National Standards for Volunteer Involvement\*](#) establishes principles and standards for engaging and supporting volunteers. For advice on leading and working with volunteers in recovery, the New Zealand Red Cross publication [\*Leading in Disaster Recovery: A Companion Through the Chaos\*](#) is a valuable resource with particular emphasis on self-care and supporting the team.





# PART 6

## WINDING UP AND TRANSITION

The key element that all recovery operations have in common is that if they are done well, at some point they will no longer be needed by the communities they serve. The ‘end’ of recovery, however, is not clear-cut and people may still need to access advice and support well beyond the duration of formal recovery programs and services.

The wind-up of the recovery hub and the transition of services to other providers should be done in a planned and purposeful way to avoid creating service gaps and to reassure the community that help is still available, even though the hub may no longer be operating.

### ASSESSING THE PROGRESS OF RECOVERY

How long the hub operates and the process for winding up will be influenced by a range of factors. For example, a reduction over time in the number of people accessing support from the hub is a key indicator, as is the ongoing availability of volunteers, continued access to the facility in which the hub is located, the re-establishment of community services that existed before the disaster, and the development of new, long-term recovery supports.

Recovery hubs provide an invaluable point of connection and support during the most difficult times a community can experience. Plans to discontinue the hub operations can be seen as a negative outcome by the community, particularly when it has been highly utilised and regarded.

Hub managers and volunteers will need to ensure that the winding up of the hub reflects the achievements and aligns with the progress of recovery. The community will need advance notice of plans to discontinue the hub, including advice and referrals to other services, where required. It will be important to provide reassurance to the community that help and support will still be available into the future.

As activity at the hub concludes, this will also be a time of reflection and change for hub volunteers, many of whom will have worked for long hours in a complex, stressful and at times, distressing environment. In the weeks and months ahead, volunteers may need support for their own mental health and information about how to access this help should be provided as part of the transition process.

Section 3.3 of the [Community Recovery Handbook](#), Operationalising Recovery, provides information about recovery services over time and Section 3.3.3 provides specific information about the transition from recovery to mainstream services.

### FINAL REPORTS

As the levels of activity and demand for services at the hub decrease, it can be a useful time to begin collating data to include in a set of final reports of the hub’s activities during recovery. Useful reporting information may include:

- Numbers of people who have accessed the hub
- Type and number of recovery services who have been based at the hub
- Number of volunteers who have supported the hub’s operation and programs

- Types of recovery activities and services the hub has provided
- Results of any surveys that may have been undertaken to assess recovery needs and progress
- Records of finance and expenditure

It can be important to include qualitative information to capture what the hub has meant to individuals and families in their recovery. Personal reflections and anecdotes can help to illustrate the value of the hub more effectively than can be achieved through the provision of quantitative data and statistics alone.

### EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The operation of a community recovery hub provides a critical opportunity to evaluate local recovery plans, processes, achievements and challenges. Information and feedback should be sought from a broad range of stakeholders, which may include people who have been directly and indirectly affected by the disaster; hub volunteers; volunteers with other services and programs; donors; elected representatives and, recovery partners and service providers.

It is important to acknowledge that disasters, by their nature, mean that not everything works as intended and things do not always go according to plan. Open, honest and inclusive recovery evaluations are invaluable in being able to genuinely assess what has worked well, what has not worked and what should be done differently in future.

Section 2.4.7 of the [Community Recovery Handbook](#) provides information on continuous improvement through monitoring and evaluation of recovery activities.





## PART 7 RECOVERY RESOURCES

- *Wollondilly Emergency Dashboard* – Wollondilly Shire Council
- *Handbook 2 Community Recovery* – Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience
- *Handbook 12 Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for spontaneous volunteers* – Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience
- *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* – Volunteering Australia
- *Communicating in Recovery* – Australian Red Cross
- *Psychological First Aid: Supporting people affected by disaster in Australia* – Australian Red Cross
- *Leading in Disaster Recovery* – A Companion Through the Chaos – New Zealand Red Cross

## PART 8 SAMPLE RECOVERY HUB TEMPLATES

- *Volunteer Roster*
- *Registration of Impacted People*
- *Checklist of Services Accessed*
- *Communication Plan*
- *Equipment Checklist*
- *Issues Management Record*
- *Risk Management Matrix*
- *Incident/Near Miss Report*
- *Grievance or Complaint Process*
- *Record of Complaint/Grievance*

## PART 9 ONLINE TRAINING

### INTRODUCTION

This module of online training is provided for community groups who may be interested in establishing a community recovery hub. The training is designed to be self-paced and can be completed individually or by members of a group. Its purpose is to help explore and understand how to support recovery through the successful operation of an effective community recovery hub.

The training is comprised of five sections which align to the first five parts of the Toolkit:

**Part 1** – When Disasters Happen

**Part 2** – Planning a Community Recovery Hub

**Part 3** – Establishing a Community Recovery Hub

**Part 4** – Operating a Community Recovery Hub

**Part 5** – Key Challenges in Recovery

The training can be completed over a number of sessions and is based on the types of discussions and decisions that should be undertaken by a community group who want to operate a community recovery hub.



TO ACCESS THE  
*Online Training*

Scan the QR code to access the online training or visit <https://canvas.instructure.com/register> and use the code **6AF76D**

## Sample Volunteer Roster

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hub Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed operating hours for today:      Open \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM      Close \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM

Shift One	START _____ AM/PM	FINISH _____ AM/PM	
Role	Name	Sign on	Sign off
Recovery Hub Manager			
Administration Officer			
Recovery Hub Volunteer			
Recovery Hub Volunteer			
Recovery Hub Volunteer			

Shift Two (if required)	START _____ AM/PM	FINISH _____ AM/PM	
Role	Name	Sign on	Sign off
Recovery Hub Manager			
Administration Officer			
Recovery Hub Volunteer			
Recovery Hub Volunteer			
Recovery Hub Volunteer			

**Please Note**

*\* Delete if there is no second shift today*

Hub briefing for all volunteers	Shift One: _____ AM/PM	Shift Two: _____ AM/PM*
Hub Debrief / Handover for all volunteers	Shift One: _____ AM/PM	Shift Two: _____ AM/PM*

*It is important to take regular breaks throughout your shift to manage fatigue and to support the best interests of volunteers and the community. Please coordinate your breaks so there are enough volunteers available to provide assistance and to ensure the smooth running of the Hub.*

*For any issues relating to your shift, please see the Recovery Hub Manager.*

*Thank you for your support!*

## Sample Registration Form

Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Has your property at this address been affected?      ☐ YES      ☐ NO      ☐ UNSURE  
*If NO or Unsure, please go to Question 3*

2. If YES, what is the impact on your property?

House      ☐ Damaged      ☐ Destroyed      \_\_\_\_\_

Sheds / Outbuildings      ☐ Damaged      ☐ Destroyed      \_\_\_\_\_

Fences      ☐ Damaged      ☐ Destroyed      \_\_\_\_\_

Pets / Livestock      ☐ Injured      ☐ At risk      \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many people (including adults and children) live in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How has the emergency affected you and/or members of your household?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Where are you currently staying?      ☐ At home      ☐ Other location      *If other location, please provide address*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you registered with Red Cross Register.Find.Reuinte?      ☐ YES      ☐ NO

7. Sharing the information on this form with other service providers may be helpful in accessing recovery services and support. Do you give your permission for this information to be shared?      ☐ YES      ☐ NO

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Sample Checklist of Services Accessed

Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

*Navigating recovery services can be complicated, and with new grants and services being made available over time, it can be hard to keep track of which providers you have been in touch with, and which ones you are still to contact.*

*This checklist is for you to complete and keep as your record of the services you have accessed. It does not need to be shown to anyone and it is not a requirement to complete this form to receive assistance or support from any provider.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Service	Date contacted	Notes	Date for follow-up contact (if required)	Complete
<i>E.g. Services NSW</i>	<i>01/01/23</i>	<i>Registered and applied for grant payment</i>	<i>01/02/23</i>	

# Sample Communication Plan

Access to relevant, clear, targeted and timely information is a critical factor in disaster recovery. Communication updates should be provided at least daily and should be inclusive of all impacted people, recovery agencies and volunteers. Where a situation is changing rapidly, more frequent updates will be needed.

Communication planning should consider the different communication options that may be available and how two-way communication with the community will be supported, as well as barriers that may prevent people accessing information, such as power outages or disruption to telecommunication services.

Early in the recovery phase, the most effective communication may be through face-to-face briefings and the use of noticeboards and flyers. The Australian Red Cross guide [Communicating in Recovery](#) provides useful information about how to communicate effectively after an emergency or disaster.

Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

Communication Plan for week beginning: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>Example</i>	Today we will communicate via: <i>(indicate methods)</i>	Hub Briefings will be held at:	Spokespeople are:	We will hear from the community via:
Day 1 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Noticeboards <input type="checkbox"/> Community meeting(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Social media <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters / flyers <input type="checkbox"/> Local media	____AM/PM  ____PM/PM	Hub Manager  Communication Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> Outreach <input type="checkbox"/> Surveys <input type="checkbox"/> Input from the community at meetings / briefings
Day 2 _____				
Day 3 _____				
Day 4 _____				
Day 5 _____				
Day 6 _____				
Day 7 _____				

# Sample Equipment and Supplies Checklist

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

Facility Equipment			
Number	Item(s)	Owned by / Borrowed from	Returned on
<i>e.g. 6</i>	<i>Folding tables</i>	<i>Lions Club</i>	<i>14/09/2022</i>
	Chairs		
	Tables		
	Noticeboards		
	Refrigerator(s)		
	Kettle(s) / Urn		
	Portable public address (PA) system		
	Radio		
	Television		
	Computer / laptop		
	Printer		
	Photocopier		
	Brochure stands		
	Shelving		
	Signage		
	Power boards and leads		

Facility Supplies		
Item(s)	Sourced from	Checked / replenished on
<i>e.g. First Aid Kit</i>	<i>St John's Ambulance</i>	<i>14/09/2022</i>
Drinking water		
Cleaning equipment and supplies		
Tea / coffee making supplies		
Stationery (pens, markers, tape, folders, notepads, staplers, hole punches, labels, etc)		
Photocopy paper		
Volunteer identification (vests / name badges)		
First aid supplies		

# Sample Issues Management Register

Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Issue	Key Contact(s)	Action / Resolution	Complete
<i>E.g. 01/01/23</i>	<i>Inadequate storage for donated items that can't be used at this time.</i>	<i>M. Jarvis (Rotary) and T. Smith (Hub Manager)</i>	<i>Rotary providing a shipping container to be located at the rear of the Hub. Arriving on Thursday.</i>	



# Sample Risk Assessment

Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessing and managing risk is a critical part of running a community recovery hub. Risks should be assessed during the planning stage and regularly reviewed during the Hub’s operation. Consider each risk in terms of how likely it is to happen (likelihood) and what the consequences of the risk would be (impact). Low risks should be monitored and managed during the operation of the Hub. Medium to high risks will require specific measures to remove or reduce the hazard posed to volunteers and the community.

		IMPACT OF RISK		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
LIKELIHOOD OF RISK	LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH

Type of risk	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Action
<i>E.g. Loss of electricity supply to the Hub</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Arrange access to a generator on stand-by in the event of power outage</i>

# Sample Incident / Near Miss Report

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

Report completed by: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the incident / hazard / near miss (Describe the task, equipment, location, tools, and people involved, and any action taken to ensure the safety of those who may have been affected).

Describe what was done or what needs to be done to fix the hazard or incident (Include any suggestions you have for reducing the risk or eliminating the problem, for example repair or maintenance, updated procedure, improved training).

Please provide this completed report to the Recovery Hub Manager

## OFFICE USE

Has this incident / near miss been followed up? Yes No

Describe what has been done to address the hazard/incident, or where this has not been possible, identify the person to whom it has been referred:

Do you consider the hazard/incident resolved? Yes No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Wollondilly Shire Council Community Recovery Hub Toolkit

## Sample Grievance or Complaint Process

Disaster recovery is a complex and distressing environment, and everyone involved in a Community Recovery Hub should understand that grievances or complaints may arise from time to time. These may involve anyone engaged in the Hub including individuals, community organisations, Hub volunteers or service providers. It is important for people’s recovery and for the effective running of the Hub that any grievance or complaint is managed in a fair, consistent, and timely way.

**Step 1:** It may be possible to resolve an issue by speaking directly to the person or people involved. Try to find a quiet space and a time for this conversation to happen where everyone can concentrate on the issue and work together on a resolution. At the end of this conversation, it will be important that everyone has a clear understanding about what has been agreed, what further action (if any) is required, and who will be responsible for taking that action.

**Step 2:** If the issue is serious or you would like to raise it formally, this should be done in writing in either a letter or email, or by completing – or having someone help you complete - the *Record of Grievance or Complaint* template on the next page. Your written complaint should be given to the Recovery Hub Manager, or a member of Council’s recovery staff, or alternatively you may direct your written complaint to the chairperson or president of the community organisation that is managing the Recovery Hub.

**Step 3.** A representative of the community organisation that is managing the Hub will contact you within 3 business days from when you lodge your written grievance or complaint to arrange a time to discuss the matter with you. You are encouraged to have someone attend this discussion with you if you feel that would be helpful. The purpose of the discussion will be to develop a clear understanding of the issue(s) and context of the complaint and to identify options for the matter to be resolved or escalated, should this be necessary. A written record of this meeting should be made and circulated to all participants. This record should include information about how the complaint will be resolved, or to whom it will be referred. Wherever possible, this discussion should occur within 7 days of the date when the grievance or complaint is made.

**Step 4.** If the grievance or complaint is not able to be resolved during Step 3, the matter should be referred for independent mediation. Council may be able to provide information about a suitable mediation service or advice can be sought from the NSW Government Community Justice Centres by calling 1800 990 777.

**Please note:** The confidentiality of all parties must be protected throughout the grievance / complaint process, unless it would be unlawful to do so. Where a grievance or complaint relates to any behaviour or activity that may be of a criminal nature, NSW Police should be advised immediately.

## Sample Record of Grievance or Complaint

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location of Recovery Hub: \_\_\_\_\_

Report completed by: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Role \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the nature of the grievance or complaint (Describe the issue and timeframe, identify the people involved and describe the actual or potential effect of the issue).

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Has the issue been discussed with those directly involved? Yes ☐ No ☐

Describe what was done or what needs to be done to address the grievance or complaint. (Include any suggestions for how to resolve the issue and/or how to avoid any recurrence in future).

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Please provide this completed report to the Recovery Hub Manager

### OFFICE USE

Has this grievance / complaint been followed up? Yes ☐ No ☐

Describe what has been done to address the grievance / complaint, or where this has not been possible, identify the person to whom it has been referred:

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Do you consider the grievance / complaint resolved? Yes ☐ No ☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_





**Wollondilly**  
Shire Council

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*Lake Burragorang and valley in Nattai*