

**Macedon Ranges
Children and Young People Emergency Sub Plan**

**Version 2.2
December 2018**

Version control

Version #	Date of issue	Author(s)	Brief description of change
V1	April 2014	AH	
V2	April 2015	KD	Full rewrite & name change (from Children's Plan)
V2.1	September 2017	KD	Update
V2.2	December 2018	KD	Removal of suicide and sudden info to go into separate plan Finalise

Contents

Introduction	7
Aim	7
Purpose	7
Scope	7
Development and Authority	8
Council's role in emergencies	8
Child safeguarding and Child Safe Standards	8
Action Plan.....	9
Activation	9
Training.....	9
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	10
Distribution.....	10
Contact directories	10
Review	10
Exercises	10
Sharing	10
Activities Before, During and After Emergencies	11
Before	11
During and After.....	12
Child Friendly Spaces	13
Child Safe Reporting Mechanism.....	14
Suicide or sudden death	16
Appendix A: Children and Young People Plan: Draft Action Plan	17
Appendix B: Memorandum of Understanding	19
Appendix C: List of Acronyms	20
Appendix D: Child Protection Code of Conduct:	21
Appendix E: Distribution register	23
Appendix F: Check List for Relief/Recovery Centres	24
Appendix G: How do children react to disasters?	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Introduction

Children and young people respond to disasters in a different way to adults, and have unique needs that must be addressed when planning relief and recovery activities. Additionally children and young people have capacity, energy and innovation and are able to contribute ideas and to assist in the delivery of activities that can support their community to be prepared for a range of disasters. We are keen to harness this energy and aim to involve them in every step on the emergency management continuum.

Moreover, sudden death and suicide can impact children and young people in the same way that a disaster can and Council has a role in supporting them when this happens. Council identified that the unique needs and abilities of children and young people was not recognised in our emergency management planning and that children and young people (and staff with expertise in this area) had little or no input to the issues that could affect them during an emergency.

In response, Council's Municipal Emergency Recovery Planning Committee (MEMPC) created the Children's Emergency Sub-Committee. The sub-committee has developed this Children and Young People Emergency Sub-plan (the plan) to form part of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMPC). Additionally, in order to ensure that young people have the opportunity to contribute to the planning process, the MEMPC has two permanent positions on the committee for young Macedon Ranges' residents.

Aim

The aim of this plan is to ensure that children and young people feel listened to and supported following a disaster, suicide or sudden death, and to identify ways that they are able to contribute before, during and after emergencies.

Purpose

This plan will identify the actions that MRSC will take to ensure that the needs of children and young people are considered and planned for as part of its emergency management responsibilities. It will outline the management, mitigation and abatement of welfare risks during and following an emergency.

Scope

For the purpose of this plan, the term "emergency" will cover disasters, suicide and sudden death. Local risks that have been identified that could lead to disaster include but are not limited to:

- Bushfire
- Storm/flood
- Pandemic
- Chemical/biological
- Heat
- Major rail/road accident

Development and Authority

This Plan has been developed with the support and input from the following:

- MRSC Family and Children's services
- MRSC Youth Development Unit
- MRSC Emergency Management Team
- Save the Children
- Young people (as represented on our MEMPC)
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Cobaw Community Health

The Children and Young People Emergency Sub-plan of the MEMP was adopted by the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee on (date).

Council's role in emergencies

There are a number of activities that Council undertakes in its emergency management role. They can be classified as things that Council does before, during and after emergencies. This plan will identify the actions that Council will take at each of these stages to mitigate the impact of emergencies on children and young people.

Child safeguarding and Child Safe Standards

Child safeguarding is a proactive approach to creating a safe and friendly environment for children and young people during and after emergencies. Child safeguarding is vital to ensure children and young people do not encounter any harm in the aftermath of an emergency. It also supports staff and volunteers who work in these environments. ('Child Safeguarding in Emergencies' Save the Children)

Factors to be considered to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in emergencies are:

- Children & young people separated from parents/guardian
- Children & young people with disabilities
- Homeless young people
- Very young children
- Children experiencing/showing signs of distress, anxiety or confusion
- Increased family violence following emergencies.

This plan will identify ways to imbed child safeguarding principles in Council's emergency management activities.

Additionally we understand that cultural practices exist for Aboriginal children, CALD children and children with a disability that may impact on the way emergency relief and recovery services are delivered, and we will modify support offered where practicable.

Further strengthening the need to ensure the safety of children and young people in emergencies is the introduction by the Victorian state government of the Child Safe Standards.

The standards are compulsory for all organisations providing services to children, and aim to drive cultural change in organisations so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. This will assist organisations to:

- prevent child abuse
- encourage reporting of any abuse that does occur
- improve responses to any allegations of child abuse.

Much of these standards address the requirements for organisations to have strategies and procedures that establish clear expectations from staff about appropriate behaviour when dealing with children. However the standards also note that strategies should be in place that promote the participation and empowerment of children.

Action Plan

In addition to the activities of the Children's Emergency Sub-Committee, this plan will identify short and long term actions that Council will undertake to ensure that this plan fulfils its aim. It will do this by developing an action plan that will outline the actions and an achievable timeframe for implementation. The Children's Emergency Sub-Committee are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the action plan.

Activation

This plan is activated by any of the following:

- The opening of a relief centre
- The opening of a recovery centre
- Following the suicide of a young person that is likely to impact on children and young people in the Macedon Ranges (where the subcommittee is notified)
- Following the sudden death of a person that is likely to impact on children and young people in the Macedon Ranges (where the subcommittee is notified)

Training

Training of staff and volunteers that have a role in protecting children and young people during and after an emergency is an essential component in ensuring their welfare. As identified in the action plan (Appendix A), Council will seek to have all staff that have nominated themselves to work in a relief or recovery centre undertake Mental Health First Aid training or Youth Mental Health First Aid training as in minimum. Staff and volunteers that have a nominated role in protecting children and young people during and after an emergency will also have a Working with Children Check (WWCC).

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Any partnerships developed between Council and other providers for the purpose of implementing any part of this plan will be formalised by a Memorandum of Understanding and such MOUs will form part of this plan and be noted at Appendix B.

Distribution

This plan will be distributed to the following:

- MEM
- MERO
- MRM
- Save the Children
- Department of Health and Human Services
- All Macedon Ranges primary and secondary schools
- Victoria Police
- Ambulance Victoria
- Macedon Ranges medical centres
- Other internal or external personnel, where appropriate

(see Appendix C for the List of Acronyms; Appendix E for Distribution Register)

Contact directories

Contact details for internal staff, volunteers and external agencies and suppliers are included in the MEMPlan. The Duty MRM will keep a separate list of afterhours contact details for suitable, screened Child Safe Team Leader and other authorised staff/volunteers.

Review

The Municipal Children's Emergency Sub-Committee will review this plan 12 months after adoption and then biennially, or following an emergency event involving its activation.

Exercises

Exercises are the best way to test a plan. Exercises are conducted by Council in conjunction with other agencies to enhance the training of emergency management personnel and to allow for the testing of emergency arrangements. Where ever possible emergency exercises should contain elements that test this plan.

Sharing

This plan is available to other LGAs, governments or other organisations to adapt to meet their needs. Macedon Ranges Shire Council asks that appropriate acknowledgement is given when any or all of this plan is used.

Activities Before, During and After Emergencies

Before

Council protects the community's welfare through ongoing prevention strategies and programs. In this planning and prevention phase of emergency management Council will ensure that the needs of children and young people are considered and actions identified to address them. To help achieve this, the MEMPC has two permanent positions on the committee for young Macedon Ranges residents so that their input can be sought on preparedness activities that impact young people.

Activities that are or can be undertaken in the preparedness phase include:

Staff and Volunteers recruited that will have contact with children during an emergency

- Pre - Screening – police check and current working with children checks
- Accountability lines established (clear who they report to)
- Able to be identified in the ERC or RC
- Aware how to raise/report a concern about the safety or wellbeing of a child/young person
- Read and sign the Code of Conduct at Appendix D

Education & Training

- Youth Mental Health First Aid or Mental Health First Aid for staff and volunteers who will have contact with children
- Family Violence in Emergencies training for staff and volunteers who will have contact with affected residents including outreach workers
- Familiarisation of this plan
- Engagement with all Macedon Ranges schools so they are aware of the support that is available

Assessment of ERCs and RCs

Conduct assessment of all centres identified as ERCs or RCs and ensure they are fit for purpose. Refer to Appendix F: Check List for Relief/Recovery Centres

Involvement of young people in preparedness activities

- Prevention preparedness via representation on MEMPC
- Sharing info on social media
- MEMPC Exercises

During and After

During and after an emergency, Council has a role to provide relief and recovery to affected communities. Activities that are undertaken during and after an emergency where the needs of children and young people must be considered are as follows.

Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs) and Recovery Centres (RCs)

When an ERC or RC is activated the MRM will:

- Direct the ERC or RC Manager to establish a child friendly space at the ERC and/or RC
- Appoint a Child Safe Team Leader from the pool of suitably screened/trained staff and ensure that they are easily identified by everyone in the relief centre.

Save the Children Mobile Youth Van

Seek access to the Save the Children Mobile Youth Van. Sub-committee to liaise with STC to have the van at RCs where possible.

Appropriate Referrals

Ensure that local health services are able to take referrals for children after emergencies.

Outreach Programs

Typically 'outreach' is a team (made up of a mix of Council staff and or volunteers) visiting properties in an area affected by an emergency to provide information about recovery services and support.

When conducting outreach, we will ensure that:

- All staff are made aware of the needs and safety of children and young people.
- At least one member of the outreach team has a Working with Children Check (WWCC).
- Outreach workers are never in the company of a child without another member of the outreach team or the child's parent or guardian present.
- Distressing imagery or discussion does not take place or is available where children can see/hear it.
- Outreach workers are aware of the increased incidence of domestic violence following an emergency (see 'Training' above).

If an outreach worker witnesses, suspects or has child abuse disclosed to them they must report it to the Outreach Coordinator immediately.

An outreach worker may encounter children at home without an adult present. In this circumstance workers should:

- Not engage the child in in-depth conversation. Do not attempt to complete a needs assessment, provide general or specific information

- Leave a calling card for the appropriate adult/s and leave the property
- Not enter the house.
- Call the Outreach Coordinator if the child appears distressed about being left alone.

If an outreach worker suspects a child is in imminent danger, call 000.

In addition to traditional outreach, we should consider ways that we can conduct youth outreach to ensure we are identifying activities and services that will support young people to recover optimally. We will work with our Youth team and MEMPC young people to do this.

When conducting youth outreach, we will ensure that:

- All staff are made aware of the needs and safety of children and young people.
- At least one member of the outreach team has a Working with Children Check (WWCC).
- Outreach workers are never in the company of a child without another member of the outreach team or the child's parent or guardian present.
- Distressing imagery or discussion does not take place or is available where children can see/hear it.
- Outreach workers are aware of the increased incidence of domestic violence following an emergency (see 'Training' above).

If an outreach worker witnesses, suspects or has child abuse disclosed to them they must report it to the Outreach Coordinator immediately.

Involvement of young people in relief and recovery activities

- Sharing info on social media
- Supporting other young people at ERCs
- Helping with clean up

Child Friendly Spaces

Child Friendly Spaces are supervised environments, within relief and recovery centres, operated by trained and pre-screened staff, in which parents and caregivers can leave their children while they address immediate needs such as housing, financial and medical needs.

- All staff and volunteers working in child friendly spaces (CFS) or centres to be screened and sign Code of Conduct for working with children and wear identification
- All staff and volunteers formally appointed to work in CFS or centres – not allow people to turn up and offer to volunteer unsolicited

- Child Safe Team Leader (CSTL) be appointed and easily identifiable – main contact point for children, young people, parents, and staff and volunteers to contact if they have a concern about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person
- Ensure that adequate provision is made for infants, this includes consulting with MCH to support breast feeding mothers and appropriate supplies for bottle fed infants
- Reporting mechanisms for concerns about a child/young person or an adult be made clear to everyone in ERC or RC (include local statutory reporting mechanisms)
- Adequate child/adult ratios for supervision of children and young people
- Supervision of staff and volunteers by CSTL
- Physical environment assessed to ensure child safety – family groups separate from single adults. Toilet areas well-lit all night.
- Program activities age appropriate (mix of pre-primary, primary and youth activities)
- Program activities take into account different activities that would appeal to boys and girls
- Children and young people made aware of evacuation and emergency procedures

Role of Child Safe Team Leader

- Specific people designated as Child Safe Team Leader (CSTL) for the duration of an emergency response to operationalize and monitor child safeguarding procedures,
- Responsible for investigating any reports of children at risk
- Responsible for supervision of separated children and young people and collaborate with agencies on reunification

Child Safe Reporting Mechanism

Any ERC or RC personnel who have reported to them or who have concerns about the welfare of any child in an ERC or RC will immediately inform the CSTL. The CSTL will take immediate action to ensure the child at risk is taken out of the environment causing the risk. This includes physical and psychological risk. The CSTL will then ensure the ERC or RC Manager is notified of the situation.

In an ERC, the ERC Manager will liaise with the Victoria Police member allocated the ERC who will determine whether and what action should be taken. The ERC Manager will inform the MRM as soon as practicable. The ERC Manager will ensure appropriate record keeping of any incident.

In an RC the RC Manager will liaise with the MRM to determine whether and what action should be taken. The RC Manager will contact Police to attend if a child attends unaccompanied or the manager feels the child is at risk by another person or an offence

against a child has or may possibly occur. The RC Manager will ensure appropriate record keeping of any incident.

If there is any uncertainty about the action that should be taken, the ERC Manager or Victoria Police member should refer to DHHS child protection for advice. Macedon Ranges Shire is part of the North-western rural DHHS region and the contacts are as follows:

During business hours call: 1800 675 598

After hours call: 13 12 78

Suicide or sudden death

The Victorian Government has endorsed a set of emergency management priorities that underpin and guide all decisions made during emergencies in Victoria. The top priority is primacy of life. The emergency management system that provides direction in how emergencies are managed now includes *Consequence* as one of the key considerations. These provide the impetus and responsibility to develop a response to suicide (and where necessary, sudden death) that sits in an emergency management framework.

The consequences of suicide are well documented. Evidence tells us that after a suicide, friends and family left behind are up to six times more likely to take their own lives as a result. Therefore it is critical to ensure that prompt, appropriate and efficient resourcing and supports are in place for affected communities.

Equally, the sudden death of a child or young person can have a significant impact on communities, particularly where a community is already bereaved or impacted by an emergency.

In response to this, Council has developed a Suicide and Sudden Death Plan. To access this please contact council's Coordinator of Youth Development or Coordinator of Emergency Management.

Appendix A: Children and Young People Plan: Action Plan

Action	Agencies	Timeframe
Ensure all workers in ERCs and RCs are trained in Mental Health First Aid and/or Youth Mental Health First Aid (or at least one of the workers with the YMHFA)	MRSC	
All staff have current Working With Children Check	MRSC	
Identify partnerships that can support this plan	MRSC	
Develop Memorandums of Understanding with partners	MRSC	
Identify opportunities for young people to be engaged in the emergency management continuum – before – during – after	MRSC	
Undertake activities that ensures succession of MEMPC reps	MRSC	
Ensure sub-committee is engaged in the development of new plans	MRSC	
Test ERCs for child safeguarding	MRSC	
Identify who can provide appropriate support for Aboriginal, CALD and children with a disability in ERCs and RCs	MRSC	
Ensure at least one member of each ERC team has a working with children check (WWCC) and is equipped to undertake role of Child Safe Team Leader (CSTL)	MRSC	
Develop appropriate ID for Child Safe staff including a tabard that is easily identifiable	MRSC	
Factors to be considered to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in emergencies are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & young people separated from parents/guardian • Children & young people with disabilities • Homeless young people • Very young children • Children experiencing/showing signs of distress, anxiety or confusion 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased family violence following emergencies. 		
<p>In addition to traditional outreach, we should consider ways that we can conduct youth outreach to ensure we are identifying activities and services that will support young people to recover optimally. We will work with our Youth team and MEMPC young people to do this.</p>		
<p>Offer CRAF to all ERC RC Outreach staff</p>		

Appendix B: Memorandum of Understanding

(To be developed when partners identified and partnerships entered into – see action plan)

Appendix C: List of Acronyms

CFA	Country Fire Authority
CFS	Child Friendly Spaces
DHHS	Department of Human Services
EM	Emergency Management
EMC	Emergency Management Commissioner
EMLO	Emergency Management Liaison Officer
EMMV	Emergency Management Manual Victoria
EMP	Emergency Management Plan
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
ERC	Emergency Relief Centre
MECC	Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre
MEMP	Municipal Emergency Management Plan
MEMPC	Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee
MERC	Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator
MERO	Municipal Emergency Resources Officer
MRSC	Macedon Ranges Shire Council
MRM	Municipal Recovery Manager
RC	Red Cross
SA	Salvation Army
SES	State Emergency Service
VCC	Victorian Council of Churches
VicPol	Victoria Police

Appendix D: Child Protection Code of Conduct:

(Based on Save the Children Australia: Code of Conduct)

Whilst employed, engaged or representing Macedon Ranges Shire Council,

I will:

- Treat all children and young people with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, disability, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, birth or other status
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents/guardians, community members, personnel
- Not use physical or humiliating punishment on children or young people
- Encourage children, young people, parents/guardians, community members, partner organisation personnel, to speak up about issues that affect them
- Immediately report concerns or allegations for the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, or breach of this Policy and Code of Conduct in accordance with MRSC Reporting Process
- **Ensure that another adult is present** when I am working with children or in contact with children involved in emergency relief or recovery activities
- Speak with my Team Leader about any concerns I have of my involvement in any situation where my words, actions or behaviour may be misinterpreted
- Speak with my Team Leader if I am involved in any situation which would be likely to have a negative impact on the reputation of Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence which occurred before or occurs during my employment/engagement with MRSC that relates to child exploitation and abuse
- Use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or young people or access child exploitation materials through any medium
- Protect children from distressing images and news reports

And I will not:

- Use language that is offensive, discriminatory, demeaning, shaming, culturally inappropriate, abusive or of a sexual nature when speaking with or in the presence of a child or young person
- Engage in behaviour to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade a child or young person or otherwise emotionally or psychologically abuse a child or young person including exposing them to family violence
- Physically abuse a child or young person
- Use social media to contact, access, solicit or befriend a child or young person involved in a relief or recovery program activity and not place images of those children or young people on personal social media sites

- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child or young person in an abusive, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way
- Condone or participate in behaviour with children or young people which is illegal or abusive
- Not spend time with children or young people involved in relief or recovery programs and activities outside work hours.
- Discriminate against or act in favour of particular children or young people to the exclusion of others
- Do things for children involved in MRSC programs or activities of a personal nature that they can do for themselves such as toileting or changing their clothes

Use of children’s images:

When photographing or filming a child or using children’s images for work-related purposes I must:

- Obtain informed consent from the child and parent/guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and facts
- Ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form
- Ensure a child is not subject to a legal order (i.e. Family Court, domestic violence order, child protection or criminal order) where the safety of the child or parent/guardian may be at risk or the privacy of the child is compromised, if the identity and location of the child is revealed

Signed:	
Name:	
Date:	
Council position:	
EM Role:	

Appendix E: Distribution register

Name and position	Item/version distributed	Date of distribution
As per MEMPlan		
Children & Young People Team Leader		
Children & Young People Deputy Team Leader		

Appendix F: Check List for Relief/Recovery Centres

Physical Safety and Security		
Questions	Yes/No	Strategy to address gap
Is there a location for children in a secure section of the centre?		
Are children supervised at all times?		
Are there security measures to ensure the children's section is protected at all times?		
Are children secure in an area away from natural hazards? E.g. Rivers and lakes.		
Are children secure in an area away from other physical hazards? E.g. Roads, heavy machinery, cooking equipment.		
Are children secure in an area away from animals that may be dangerous? E.g. Pets or stock.		
Are children able to safely access all relevant areas of the centre without passing hazards? E.g. Bathrooms, play areas.		

Are all areas accessible and safe for children with physical disabilities? E.g. Wheelchair access.		
Do family sleeping areas have direct access to bathrooms? Are infant and children's washing facilities available?		
Are there centre staff monitoring bathroom activity to reduce the risk of inappropriate activity in bathrooms?		
Are bathrooms segregated by sex and well-lit inside and outside? Are there family bathrooms so that parents can supervise children of a different sex.		
Are all areas well-lit at night? E.g. Children's paths to bathrooms.		
Is there an agency responsible for first aid?		
Are there hygiene standards in place across the Emergency Relief Centre? E.g. Food, linen, rubbish disposal.		
Child Protection		
Are children in the care of their parent/legal guardian?		
Is there evidence of child neglect or abuse?		

<p>Are there systems in place to report unlawful acts against children or concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child? Are centre staff and volunteers aware of this system?</p>		
<p>Has information on reporting concerns regarding child neglect/abuse been made public? Do centre staff know how to refer issues if appropriate? Is there a staff member designated to monitor concerns from all those in the centre including staff, community and children?</p>		
<p>Is the area for families and children separate from the area for single men and single women?</p>		
<p>Have all agency staff and volunteers interacting with children been checked for photo ID? Is there a registration process?</p>		
<p>Do all people working with children have police checks and working with children checks? Is there a system to register and monitor this?</p>		
<p>Is there a sign in and sign out system for all visitors entering areas that are designated for children?</p>		
<p>Child Friendliness</p>		
<p>Do children have age appropriate spaces to play, eat and sleep?</p>		

Is there a space for rest and relaxation? E.g. porta cots for infants.		
Is there a space for active play?		
Are there distressing images visible to children? E.g. News footage.		
Are signs and notices also located at a child friendly level? E.g. Directions to bathrooms.		
Is there information letting children know who they can talk to if they have any concerns for their safety or for the safety of others? Is this information displayed in a way and at a level that is appropriate for children?		
Are nutritious, age appropriate meals, drinks and snacks available for children? Are children able to access food outside meal times?		
Is the distribution of food being appropriately supervised? E.g. Monitoring hygiene and possible food allergies.		
Are there appropriate medical staff and services available to address the needs of children? E.g. Paediatrician, maternal and child health nurse or helpline numbers.		
Are children's mental health needs being assessed and addressed?		
Has the Emergency Relief Centre plan for the centre considered the needs of children?		

Are there adequate sanitation services available for children? E.g. Can children reach hand basins in the bathrooms?		
Is there a nappy changing area? Is there appropriate sanitation and proper disposal of nappies?		
Is there a private, quiet area for breast feeding women? Is there support for breastfeeding women if required? E.g. Maternal and child health nurse, help line number.		
Is there an appropriate area with supplies for preparing formula for bottle fed babies? Can this be accessed any time day or night?		
Protecting children from distressing images and news reports		
Child Rights		
If the centre is open for a protracted period is there provision for continuity of education? E.g. Buses to schools or tutors in Emergency Relief Centre centre.		
Are children being treated with respect and consideration?		
Are children's rights being upheld?		
Are photographers seeking parental consent to take photos?		

Are children being listened to?		
Are children's opinions and concerns being acted upon when appropriate? E.g. Concerns about scary noises in the centre.		
Are individual children's needs being discussed confidentially and respectfully?		