



400A Belgrave-Gembrook Rd, Emerald 3782
info@emeraldvillagecommittee.org

SUPPLEMENTARY

Submission to the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry into Climate Resilience.

This supplementary submission is provided by the Emerald Village Association Incorporated (EVA).

Emerald Village Association Inc

Postal address c/- Hills Hub, Belgrave Gembrook Road, Emerald 3782.

The EVA greatly appreciated the opportunity for Kate Forster, Claude Cullino and Trevor Budge from the Association to provide evidence to the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee in relation to its Inquiry into Climate Resilience when it visited Emerald on 10 October 2024

This Supplementary Submission provides

- additional material relevant to the evidence given,
- addresses questions that were raised and taken on notice, and
- provides commentary on matters we heard.

Significantly the evidence that emerged from various witnesses reinforced several positions that the EVA has been progressively developing and briefly referred to at the hearing.

Since our presentation to the Committee the EVA has learnt of significant local progress resulting from our continuing advocacy and grant applications:

- a) Installation of Ausnet Rapid Generation Points - Emerald and Cockatoo: This work is being carried out currently in response to the community feedback to DEECA and AUSNET and again after the Interim report from the Network Outage Review Panel.
- b) A \$17,500 grant from AUSNET for Community Information Kits to increase resilience across the Hills Communities.

The EVA submits that the Committee Inquiry Report should: -

1. Recognise that there are commonalities across all the Hills communities. Consequently, a framework of support is needed which provides for strong collaboration between communities which share common circumstances in relation to climate resilience planning and responses.
2. Recognise that as well as these commonalities, the reality is that each place and community is different. Consequently, no two places are the same in terms of

their circumstances and how climate impacts them, their infrastructure and built environment, the issues they experience, their needs, and that local climate resilience strategies and plans are needed, and they should be co-designed in partnership with their community. Suburban communities are very different to communities in the peri-urban area and Hills communities are different again.

3. Recommend that there is a strong need for each community to develop its own Climate Resilience Plan in response to its circumstances. The EVA notes that the southeast metropolitan group of Councils is one of eight groupings of Councils forming a Climate Change Alliance. Cardinia Shire is one of nine Councils in the South East Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA). The SECCCA submission at the Emerald Hearing noted that member Councils vary in their capacity and approach in responding to climate change. The contrast between Cardinia Shire Council's approach (Emerald is located within the Cardinia Shire Council) as outlined in their evidence compared with the evidence provided by the Yarra Ranges Council representative was stark. For instance, Yarra Ranges Shire Council is on the front foot, it has mapped their 49 catchments and identified the 14 critical catchments where they need to prioritise climate resilience measures, they have identified the critical emergency routes to prioritise in terms of roadworks / maintenance / trees etc. The capacity for a community to prepare its own community resilience plan should not be limited or constrained by the approach taken by the Council it is located in. Yet that is the case across Victoria – because there is no statewide framework or requirements for local government to undertake common responses and prepare consistent plans.
4. Recommend that communities be encouraged and supported to work collaboratively within statewide and local government frameworks and to develop and implement their own climate resilience plans within locally relevant co-designed strategic plans. It is essential that all local governments step up in terms of climate resilience, being pro-active is essential. But the current situation does not require a Council to move beyond a reactive approach.
5. The Committee should support and advocate the model used by Yarra Ranges Shire Council which is to *'work with each township to develop tailored Community Resilience Plans, ensuring they can respond to the various emergencies, shocks and stresses resulting from a changing climate, including bushfire, storms, heat and drought.'*
6. Include and highlight case studies of individual communities, their circumstances and characteristics, how they are impacted by climate change events such as the February 2024 storm, how they have responded and what can be learnt from a **case study** approach.

At the Inquiry the EVA advocated this approach and the Committee members asked the EVA to elaborate on this approach. The following is provided to support this approach. A case study approach will assist in three specific ways

- a) It will highlight that the circumstances of each community are different

- b) It will use real stories of what happened, how people were affected and how communities responded.
- c) It will provide real life lessons and learnings that can be applied.

The following examples are provided using Emerald as a case study.

The Emerald main street is the community's lifeline, there is only one road through town – there are no alternative roads that provide an option to pass the whole way through the town. All emergency services are dependent upon being able to use this route. All emergency facilities are either located on this route or on roads which link to it. All commercial and business facilities and services essential to ensure a functioning town are located on this road or are serviced by direct access to this road. This feature alone distinguishes Emerald from most other towns and certainly from any suburban setting. It is a circumstance that is shared with some other towns in the Hills.

Emerald – Lakeside Visitor Centre is the terminus for most Puffing Billy Railway services. Last financial year Puffing Billy carried nearly 400,000 passengers of whom about 50% were international visitors. If the Puffing Billy line is blocked by fallen trees in a storm event, passengers must be evacuated by road. If roads are blocked coaches are not able to access Puffing Billy to evacuate hundreds of stranded passengers. There is only one access road from Emerald town centre to the Lakeside Visitor Centre, if that is blocked no vehicles can access the Centre. Puffing Billy is the third most visited tourist attraction in regional Victoria and has the highest patronage by overseas visitors– its reach and significance is far more than simply the Emerald community; it is a vitally important part of Victoria's tourism visitor economy. Further on any weekend Emerald attracts hundreds of tourists many of whom visit Emerald Lake adjacent to the Visitor Centre they are also dependent on the same road access arrangements.

We strongly advocate that services are better planned and managed and that the undergrounding of power and communications is focused on key routes based on the capacity of those routes to support the continued functioning of key services and facilities in an emergency.

The Emerald community has identified that the issue of vulnerable people is far more significant than an official list of vulnerable people. The circumstances of Emerald mean that people even with access to private vehicles are trapped in their own homes, young mothers with dependent children and no access to the family car during the day are vulnerable persons and persons with the loss of power and any form of telephone or internet connection are vulnerable persons. How those persons can be assisted and ensure security and protection for them is by local street mapping. As set out above there are circumstances in Emerald where hundreds of visitors / tourists could be vulnerable persons. Each community will be different. Each community is its own case study. Identification of vulnerable persons and how to support them should be a critical element of each community's resilience plan.

In response to the situations outlined above the EVA is pursuing a case study approach and will be approaching two organisations with proposals for case

studies of Emerald to assist the community in preparing and co-designing its own strategic climate resilience plan.

1. The South East Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) seeking the assistance of their Operations Manager to talk to the Emerald community about SECCCA's Climate Change – Asset Vulnerability Assessment and how we could apply that in Emerald <https://seccca.org.au/enhancing-community-resilience>
 2. The Australian Research Centre of Excellence 21st Century Weather at Monash University
7. The EVA commends the Committee for visiting Emerald, urges the Committee in its Findings and Recommendations to embrace the ideas and strategies put forward by the EVA including applying a case study approach and highlighting Emerald as an example of the value of such an approach. The Emerald Village Association would be pleased to assist the Committee further if it requires additional information.

Yours sincerely

Peter Maloney

Peter Maloney
President

Emerald Village Association Inc.

5 November 2024