

Victorian Government Response to the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry into the 2022 flood event in Victoria

January 2025

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Glossary

AAR – After-Action Review
ADF – Australian Defence Force
AV – Ambulance Victoria
BFC – Budget and Finance Committee
BoM – Bureau of Meteorology
CAV – Consumer Affairs Victoria
CBEM –Community Based Emergency Management
CFA – Country Fire Authority
CMA – Catchment Management Authorities
DEECA – Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DFFH – Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DGS – Department of Government Services
DJCS – Department of Justice and Community Safety
DRF – Disaster Ready Fund
DTP – Department of Transport and Planning
DTV – Digital Twin Victoria
EMC – Emergency Management Commissioner
EMV – Emergency Management Victoria
ERC – Emergency Relief Centres
ERV – Emergency Recovery Victoria
FFMVic – Forest Fire Management Victoria
FRV – Fire Rescue Victoria
FWIN – Flood Warning Infrastructure Network
IGEM – the Inspector-General for Emergency Management
IMT – Incident Management Team
GMW – Goulburn Murray Water
LFG – Local Flood Guides
LSV – Life Saving Victoria
MEMP – Municipal Emergency Management Plans
MEMPC – Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee
PHN – Primary Health Network
RAP – Recognised Aboriginal Parties
REMP – Regional Emergency Management Plan
REMPC – Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee
RTR – Regional Telecommunications Review

RWMP – Regional Water Monitoring Partnerships
SAC – Flood-related Amendments Standing Advisory Committee
SEMP – State Emergency Management Plan
SoLA – Sale of Land Act 1962
VESEP – Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program
VFMS – Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy
VICSES – Victorian State Emergency Service
VPF – Victorian Preparedness Framework

1. Context

1.1 The October 2022 Flood Event

The heavy rainfall that occurred in Victoria in October 2022 (the ‘flood event’) led to devastating and prolonged flooding across the state. Occurring over thirteen weeks, flooding impacted most of the state, affecting 63 of Victoria’s 79 municipalities, and one alpine resort.

Tragically, the flood event resulted in the deaths of two people, the destruction of over 1,700 homes, and damage to a further 2,314 residences. There was also widespread damage to infrastructure, farms and public land, with flooding affecting more than 2,300 primary producers, and impacting over 12,000 agricultural properties. In addition, there were also significant impacts to the lands of 19 Traditional Owner groups.

The response to the flood event was significant in its scale and complexity. Personnel and volunteers from multiple agencies were required to work together, combining their resources and capabilities. The Victorian State Emergency Service (VICSES) was the primary responder to the flood event, with VICSES volunteers contributing over 400,000 hours of service during the flooding. Many other agencies also contributed to the response, including the Country Fire Authority (CFA); Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV); Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic); Victoria Police; Life Saving Victoria (LSV); Ambulance Victoria (AV); the Australian Defence Force (ADF); as well as inter-state and independent emergency service organisations.

Recovery from the flood event has been an immense and ongoing task. The Victorian Government has committed more than \$2.5 billion to support recovery efforts, which will be cost-shared with the Commonwealth under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). The Government has an ongoing commitment to supporting communities to recover and build resilience into the future.

Many municipalities impacted by the flood event were re-impacted by storms and flooding in January 2024, and again by further storms and bushfires in February 2024. While the impacts of the bushfires, storms, and subsequent floods differed notably from the October 2022 flood event, the cumulative and compounding effects of repeated natural disasters take a toll on individuals, communities and councils, delaying and complicating recovery.

In line with Aboriginal self-determined needs, \$6.49 million was provided to Traditional Owner Groups as part of the recovery response. Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians hold critical knowledge and a holistic understanding of how to care for and heal Country in the wake of emergency events, such as flood. Supporting Traditional Owners to care for Country in accordance with their customs, traditions and culture is critical to ensuring positive health and wellbeing outcomes, and this requires creating and maintaining strong partnerships between Traditional Owners, stakeholders and agencies to enable Traditional Owner self-determination. The Victorian Government acknowledges the importance of this in its approach to emergency management and disaster recovery, including Traditional Owners as active partners and embedding Traditional Owner knowledge in recovery-decision making. This is critical to continuing cultural practices and protecting and enhancing cultural heritage and values across the landscape. Partnerships with Traditional Owners will continue to be strengthened in the future – including through the Traditional Owner Flood Forum, to coordinate, plan and implement flood recovery and restoration efforts, and to heal Country.

1.2 Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria – Terms of Reference

On 22 February 2023, the Legislative Council agreed to the Environment and Planning Committee (the Committee) to inquire into, consider and report, by 30 June 2024, on the state’s

preparedness for and response to Victoria's major flooding event of October 2022, including but not limited to the —

1. causes of and contributors to the flood event;
2. adequacy and effectiveness of early warning systems;
3. resourcing of the State Emergency Service, the adequacy of its response to the flood event and the adequacy of its resourcing to deal with increasing floods and natural disasters in the future;
4. implementation and effectiveness of the 2016 Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy in relation to the flood event;
5. location, funding, maintenance and effectiveness of engineered structures, such as floodwalls, rural levees and culverts, as a flood mitigation strategy;
6. the flood event as a whole, including but not limited to, the catchments and floodplains of the —
 - a. Avoca River;
 - b. Barwon River;
 - c. Broken River;
 - d. Campaspe River;
 - e. Goulburn River;
 - f. Loddon River;
 - g. Maribyrnong River;
 - h. Murray River;
7. the 2007 decision of the Minister for Planning to approve the construction of a flood wall around Flemington Racecourse and whether the growing impacts of climate change were considered;
8. the implications for future planning decisions including —
 - a. how the Victorian planning framework can ensure climate mitigation is a consideration in future planning decisions; and
 - b. how corporate interests may influence decision-making at the expense of communities and climate change preparedness; and
9. any other related matters.

The Committee delivered its Final Report on 30 July 2024 following nearly 900 public submissions, two open mic sessions and 12 days of public hearings.

2. Victorian Government response to the Final Report

The Victorian Government welcomes the Final Report from the Committee's Inquiry into the state's preparedness for and response to the major flooding event of October 2022 ('the Final Report'). The Victorian Government wishes to acknowledge the significant contributions of community members who made submissions and gave evidence to inform the Final Report, including those still feeling the flood event's impacts.

The recommendations from the Final Report are reflective of issues that are well-known to the Victorian Government. In many cases, they reflect issues that are relevant to all communities and

all emergencies. As a result, a substantial portion of the Final Report's recommendations have activities underway to address key and underlying issues. The Final Report provides certainty to the Victorian Government that its attention and investment are focused in the right direction.

This document outlines the Victorian Government's response to the Final Report. It includes a high-level response to each chapter of the Final Report as well as specific responses to each of the 73 recommendations, which are included in the Appendix.

Of the 73 recommendations included in the Committee's Final Report, the Victorian Government:

- supports 16 recommendations in full;
- supports 43 recommendations in principle;
- supports 6 recommendations in part; and
- does not support 2 recommendations.

The remaining 6 recommendations are under review.

3. Victoria's flood governance arrangements

Chapter Three of the Final Report focuses on the legislative instruments and policy frameworks governing Victoria's emergency management arrangements. It summarises some of the key roles and responsibilities of those involved in flood mitigation, planning, preparedness, response and recovery.

Recommendations from Chapter 3 of the Final Report address:

- ensuring clear articulation of roles and responsibilities for flood emergencies;
- reviewing the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (VFMS); and
- confirming the functions of the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM).

3.1 Ensuring clear articulation of roles and responsibilities for flood emergencies

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of clear and effective governance arrangements to guide mitigation, preparedness, response, relief and recovery activities for major emergencies, including floods.

In 2018 the Victorian Government enacted and implemented robust emergency management planning arrangements, providing for the establishment of state, regional and municipal emergency management plans addressing the mitigation of, response to, and recovery from emergencies.

The State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP), prepared by the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC), sets out a coordinated and comprehensive approach to emergency management, including:

- information on Victoria's command, control and coordination arrangements;
- state emergency management priorities to underpin and guide all decisions made during emergencies in Victoria; and
- agency role and responsibilities for the mitigation, response and recovery phases of emergency management.

In addition to the SEMP, there are Regional Emergency Management Plans (REMPs), which contextualise the SEMP for Victoria's regions, and Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs), which contextualise REMPs for municipalities. Both levels of planning are informed by local risks.

Supporting the SEMP is the SEMP Flood Sub-Plan, which defines more complex and specific arrangements than those contained in the SEMP for managing floods across all emergency management phases. These arrangements are integral to ensuring an integrated and coordinated approach to the state's management of flood events to reduce the impact and consequences of these events on the community, infrastructure and services. The current version of the SEMP Flood sub-plan, edition 3, is under review and is due for publication in 2025. VICSES, as the control agency for flood emergencies, is leading this review on behalf of the EMC. Through the review process, VICSES is exploring opportunities to clarify the existing roles and responsibilities established through this sub-plan in collaboration with all relevant agencies.

3.2 Reviewing the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy

The VFMS was released in 2016 and sets the direction for floodplain management in Victoria. The objective of the VFMS is to ensure that Victorian communities, businesses and government agencies are aware of flooding and are actively taking measures to manage their flood risks to minimise the consequences to life, property, community wellbeing and the economy. The Victorian Government intends to commence review of the VFMS in 2025. Further information on the VFMS is included in Section 5.

3.3 Confirming functions of IGEM

Victoria's emergency management arrangements continue to be strengthened and refined in response to lessons learned from responses to natural disasters and emergency events, including the flood event. The government seeks to achieve this through continuous improvement processes, and independent reviews and inquiries.

The IGEM is an independent statutory officer appointed by the Governor in Council. Its primary role is to provide assurance to the government and community regarding Victoria's emergency management arrangements and to foster continuous improvement. IGEM's legislative review function is to undertake system-wide reviews. To fulfil this accountability, IGEM's inquiry activities are broader in scope than individual post-event reviews and instead focus on system-wide emergency management arrangements, as well as the sector's preparedness, performance, capacity and capability. This allows IGEM to identify system-level insights with transferable learnings for all hazards and emergencies.

Under 64(1)(b) of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, the IGEM has the authority to conduct self-initiated system-wide reviews. These reviews must be included in an annual forward plan prepared by the IGEM. The IGEM is also required to share a copy of its annual forward plan with the Minister for Emergency Services.

Separate to IGEM, there are several alternative government mechanisms available to review specific events such as after-action reviews or parliamentary inquiries. The Victorian Government commits to continuing to support IGEM to enable it to manage its independent role in providing sector assurance.

4. Planning and flood risk

Chapter 4 of the Final Report focuses on the mitigation, planning and preparedness phases of managing flood emergencies in Victoria. It examines how different levels of government, non-

government organisations and the public assess and mitigate flood risk. It touches on Victoria's planning system and considers how more strategic land use planning could mitigate the effects of flooding. It also considers the role of Victoria's building system in flood mitigation. Findings note that flood studies are an effective tool for assessing flood risk, but require significant levels of funding to ensure they are up to date and accessible.

Recommendations from Chapter 4 of the Final Report address:

- ensuring adequate funding for flood studies;
- timely updates to the Planning Scheme;
- building community awareness of flood risk; and
- ensuring the consideration of those most at risk in emergency management planning.

4.1 Ensuring adequate funding for flood studies

The Victorian Government recognises that regular comprehensive flood studies are critical for flood planning and mitigation. Additionally, incorporating the most up-to-date flood study outputs into the planning scheme is essential for ensuring planning controls reflect current flood risk information.

Announced in May 2023, the Victorian Government's *Flood Reclamation Roadmap* initiative will fund 32 previously unfunded regional priority flood studies by 2028. In regional Victoria, when provided with adequate funding support, councils usually lead the development of flood studies in alignment with regional priorities, and with technical support and input from Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and local VICSES personnel. Where a flood study crosses multiple council boundaries, a CMA may take the lead in partnership with the councils. This arrangement recognises the associated benefits arising from councils' existing relationships with communities and their role in administering and enforcing planning schemes and provisions.

For the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment, Melbourne Water is the designated floodplain manager and is responsible for catchment, coastal and waterway mapping of flood risk. Melbourne Water leads the development of the Port Phillip and Western Port Floodplain Management Strategy 2021-2031 using a co-design and co-delivery approach with partner organisations who also have a role in flood management.

For stormwater drainage, Melbourne Water undertakes this in partnership with the 38 councils across the Port Phillip and Westernport region. Melbourne Water typically looks after stormwater assets and services for catchments greater than 60 hectares, whereas councils are responsible for smaller catchments, which is approximately 90% of the drainage network.

Melbourne Water, in partnership with councils, is currently remodelling flood risk across the entire Greater Melbourne area, including both riverine and stormwater drains, and factoring in climate change projections to the year 2100. A flood modelling program of this scale is unprecedented in Australia.

The Victorian Government will also continue to work with floodplain management authorities and climate scientists to understand how to use climate projections in flood modelling to better predict and understand the impacts of flooding.

4.2 Timely updates to the Planning Scheme

Planning schemes must incorporate contemporary flood study outputs to ensure they reflect the most up-to-date flood risk information. The Victorian Government is continuing to deliver initiatives that accelerate the implementation of flood study planning scheme amendments. This includes appointing a Flood-related Amendments Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) in May

2023. The SAC was established to provide the Minister for Planning, councils and CMAs with timely advice on the drafting and implementation of flood-related planning scheme amendments. The SAC is also able to advise on the delivery of Victoria's Regional Flood-related Amendments Assistance Program which supports rural and regional councils to update planning schemes with maps and other flood data from completed flood studies into planning schemes.

The Victorian Government is exploring options to provide additional state support for efficient and timely flood-related updates to planning scheme amendments, following the completion of flood studies.

A new plan for Victoria is being developed to set the strategic direction for the state's growth through to 2050. A key consideration of this plan is exploring ways to guide planning and relevant authorities in managing the state's environmental constraints, and where and how development is planned in relation to flood risk.

The Final Report also recommends that the Victorian Government fund a program to raise or retrofit residential properties with flood risk, which prioritises homeowners affected by the 2022 flood event. The Victorian Government does not support this recommendation. This is because the delivery of such a program would present several practical and policy complexities, requiring the investment of significant time and resources. The thresholds and criteria for establishing the scope and scale of a program of this nature, including the potential quantum of investment, requires careful consideration of its mitigation benefits and long-term sustainable outcomes.

At this time, the Victorian Government is directing its resources to supporting homeowners affected by the 2022 flood event through recovery services outlined in Chapter 8 of this response. The Victorian Government will continue to assess the benefits of a resilient homes program for future emergencies.

4.3 Building community awareness of flood risk

Community access to and understanding of flood risk information is essential for effective readiness and response to flood events. The Victorian Government continues to support improving community awareness of flood risk and has taken steps to make flood data available to the public. This includes the publication of data on floods in Regional Victoria with a 1% chance of occurring in any year on Digital Twin Victoria (DTV), in December 2023.

There are further improvements planned to the public availability and accessibility of flood data, with work underway to scope the publication of expanded flood mapping data and make improvements to the useability of the DTV to improve communities' understandings of flood risk and encourage informed decision-making. These improvements will allow the public to search for their property and see what flood data is specific to their area.

Consideration is also being given to amending the *Sale of Land Act 1962 (Vic)* (SoLA) to improve prospective purchaser's understanding of flood risk. While the SoLA already requires a vendor to disclose occurrences of previous flooding of the property for sale, the Victorian Government is considering amendments to introduce a specific statutory disclosure requirement by vendors on flood risk. DGS will work with EMV, VICSES, Melbourne Water and CMAs to identify the most appropriate statewide source of flood risk information that will be equally accessible to all vendors (and purchasers) regardless of locality.

Efforts to improve renters' understanding of flood risk is also planned as part of the Housing Statement rental reforms. Commencing in 2025, work will be undertaken to introduce a requirement for rental providers to provide information on flood risk and mandatory disclosure of previous flooding to prospective renters (where known by a residential rental provider) as part of the rental application process.

Within a local context, Local Flood Guides (LFGs), available for over 150 communities, provide localised flood risk information and preparation advice to community members to help them stay safe during a flood event. These guides were recently updated to bolster preparedness, and facilitate more effective decision-making during flood events, strengthening the resilience of Victorian communities.

The Final Report recommends that the Victorian Government provide access to LFGs to all residents in a flood zone which identify the likely flood impacts on individual properties. While the Victorian Government recognises the intent of this recommendation, the provision of contemporary LFGs to all communities in current and future flood zones would require additional investment, which would be subject to budgetary processes. Additionally, while LFGs currently provide a valuable source of flood risk information, improving communications technologies and community technological literacy may present more effective alternatives to the LFG. The Victorian Government will continue to work with relevant organisations to consider the best method to deliver information to communities about their local flood risk.

While understanding flood risk is important, the Final Report also recommended that the Victorian Government improve individual and community awareness about their own roles and responsibilities in emergency management and make available information resources for preparing for floods and other emergencies. VICSES currently produces and maintains community engagement material relating to flooding and other emergencies including sandbagging guidance material and LFGs. In early 2024, two brand new public awareness campaigns were launched on the VICSES website and on its social media platforms, 'You don't know, so don't go' and 'Are you storm ready?'. These campaigns address floods and storms and provide advice on how to stay safe during these natural hazards.

VICSES has also received funding from the Commonwealth through Round Two of the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) for a Flood and Storm Education Project. This project will develop age-appropriate session plans and guidance material on flood and storm risk safety for students and will be delivered in 2025. Improving flood awareness amongst students is linked to improved flood awareness of their parents.

While these measures go some way to improve individual and community awareness about their own roles and responsibilities in emergency management, the Victorian Government understands that more can be done, including updating previous flood behaviour-change campaigns (for example, '15 to Float' or 'Be Flood Ready – Bag it, block it, Lift it and Leave') or more broadly promoting the new flood-safety campaign mentioned above. These initiatives will require additional investment and are subject to standard budgetary processes.

4.4 Ensuring consideration of those most at risk in emergency management planning

Consideration of those in our communities who have additional needs, including those with a disability, is an important part of emergency management planning.

The Victorian Government is committed to addressing the barriers faced by community members most at risk. In June 2024, the Victorian Government published the Victorian Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for People Most at Risk (the 'Toolkit'). The Toolkit has been co-designed by a range of stakeholders and emergency management experts and supports the notion of shared responsibility in emergency management planning and preparedness. The Toolkit also recognises that people may be disproportionately affected and/or at greater risk during emergencies and promotes focusing on identifying and supporting at risk community cohorts with tailored and flexible approaches.

The Final Report recommends that the Victorian Government ensure early warning systems include consideration of a voluntary register of people needing additional support to receive early

warning and support during natural disasters. While the Toolkit identifies risk and protective factors for at-risk community members before, during and after an emergency, the Victorian Government understands that more could be done to ensure these cohorts are adequately supported.

Additional research is required to understand how a voluntary registration system, such as the one described in recommendation 16 of the Final Report, could be developed. The analysis would need to consider how such a register would impact operational planning and service delivery services such as the existing Vulnerable Persons Register as well as the work of Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees (MEMPCs) and Regional Emergency Management Planning Committees (REMPCs), who share responsibility for at-risk groups from a planning perspective.

The Final Report also recommended the Victorian Government to provide flood risk and planning information in an appropriately accessible way for people with additional needs, including people with a disability. While VICSES has progressed easy-English and translated flood preparedness material for the public the expansion of this work to better address the accessibility needs of community members, including those with a disability, would require additional investment and would be subject to standard budgetary processes.

5. Flood mitigation infrastructure

Chapter 5 of the Final Report outlines the structural measures which are used to mitigate the effects of flooding. The Victorian Government recognises the importance of flood mitigation infrastructure in reducing the risks for Victorian communities, and the need for clear responsibilities for maintenance and management of flood mitigation infrastructure. However, it is important to also recognise that flood mitigation infrastructure cannot remove all flood risk, and that managing flood risk requires a multifaceted approach. The VFMS, through previous Victorian Flood Reviews, also notes that land use planning and building controls are generally more cost-effective than flood mitigation infrastructure, flood warning systems, education programs or emergency responses.

Recommendations from Chapter 5 of the Final Report address:

- a review of the VFMS, including levee funding and management;
- investment in flood mitigation infrastructure; and
- the management of Lake Eppalock and Lake Eildon for flood mitigation.

5.1 Review of the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy

The VFMS 2016 was developed over four years, building on extensive consultation with stakeholders and the broader community following major flooding across Victoria in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The VFMS's 56 actions have been tracked and three biennial implementation reports (snapshots) have been published. An independent audit by Ernst & Young in 2020 determined that clear governance structures had been established to engage delivery partners in the VFMS's implementation.

Since 2016, the VFMS has informed and enabled consistent decisions and actions for managing flood-related issues. The knowledge and experience gained through its implementation, internal reviews, and the recommendations from the Final Report support the reassessment of several aspects of the VFMS. The Victorian Government will review and refresh the VFMS, commencing in 2025.

5.2 Investment in flood mitigation infrastructure

The flood event highlighted there are several unmanaged levees within Victoria that are valuable to communities, but have no agreed ownership or maintenance arrangements in place and are currently not included in emergency management planning arrangements. In recognition of the benefit these unmanaged levees provide, the Victorian Government has funded the four northern CMAs to coordinate an assessment of the management arrangements for these levees. The assessment, led by CMAs, commenced in 2024 and is working with councils, VICSES, and communities to identify where changes to existing management arrangements are required. The project will identify:

- levees which require ongoing formal management and maintenance;
- unmanaged levees which may need reinforcement ahead of a flood; and
- other features in the landscape that provide limited community benefit and will be allowed to weather away with time.

The results of these assessments are due in 2025. They will provide clarity regarding responsibility for levee management and whether existing arrangements are fit for purpose to help inform the new VFMS.

In addition, the Victorian Government committed \$4.7 million in 2024 to prepare regional councils for seeking future Victorian and Commonwealth government investment in priority flood mitigation infrastructure. Councils will be funded to progress regional floodplain management strategy priority flood mitigation plans to shovel-ready status, including working with local communities to scope and develop a business case for funding construction. The VFMS sets out the criteria which guides government investment in new flood mitigation infrastructure.

5.3 The management of Lake Eppalock and Lake Eildon for flood mitigation

Victoria's major storages are managed to provide a secure and safe water supply for irrigators, towns and the environment. Despite the primary purpose of major storages not being for flood mitigation, if opportunities arise, they can at times be operated to absorb some flood water during small to medium flood events.

Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) is the storage manager for Lake Eppalock and Lake Eildon and they continuously monitor catchment conditions, storage levels and inflows, tributary flows downstream of the storage, expected demands, rain forecasts for the storages' catchment as well as the downstream tributaries' catchment, and climate outlooks. GMW uses this information to protect lake levels and make releases to meet customer demands and to comply with storage manager obligations, which includes flood mitigation where possible.

Following the flood event, the Victorian Government commissioned independent technical assessments to determine if changing the operating arrangements for both lakes, in addition to the infrastructure at Lake Eppalock only, could improve protection for downstream communities from future flooding and some of the associated financial and non-financial implications of such changes.

The Lake Eppalock Technical Assessment Report and public consultation feedback has been provided to Campaspe Shire Council for consideration, as they lead the review of the Rochester Flood Management Plan. Campaspe Shire Council with technical support from North Central Catchment Management Authority, will include the benchmarking of all flood mitigation options for Rochester such as levees, housing raising or changes to the operations/infrastructure at Lake Eppalock.

In addition, the technical assessments at Lake Eildon and Lake Eppalock included investigating new temporary operating rules during high storage and high rainfall conditions. These studies illustrated the limitations of such approaches, including:

- limitations of storage outlet infrastructure at Lake Eppalock;
- limitations in the weather forecast accuracy required to confidently make short-term releases to create airspace in the lead-up to a storm; and
- limitations in the reliability of long-range climate signals required to make seasonal changes to target storage levels.

Given current levels of forecast accuracy, such approaches are ineffective flood mitigation measures and may risk inadvertently exacerbating downstream flooding.

While new temporary operating rules are not proven to be effective, the Victorian Government supports storage managers doing what they can to mitigate flood impacts during high storage and high rainfall conditions, while ensuring appropriate protections are in place for existing entitlement holders. GMW will continue to investigate opportunities to provide additional seasonal flood mitigation based on best practice and the latest scientific evidence. If new tools emerge or modelling and forecasting accuracy improves, GMW will work with DEECA to assess changes to the existing rules, recognising that any changes would take account the interests of those who are affected by Eildon and Eppalock operations including entitlement holders and downstream landholders and communities.

6. Flood emergency warnings

Chapter 6 of the Final Report outlines the arrangements for flood predictions and monitoring, flood watches and warnings, and the adequacy and effectiveness of these systems.

Recommendations from Chapter 6 of the Final Report address:

- improvements to the state's monitoring gauge network;
- emergency warning system enhancements;
- addressing telecommunication infrastructure and digital connectivity challenges; and
- ensuring community awareness of flood risk.

6.1 Improvements to Victoria's monitoring gauge network

The VFMS sets the direction for floodplain management in Victoria, including the arrangements for flood warning systems. The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) coordinates the maintenance of 950 monitoring sites across Victoria on behalf of over 55 organisations, including councils, water corporations and CMAs under Victoria's Regional Water Monitoring Partnerships (RWMP) approach. This partnership approach allows data to be collected to a well-defined standard and used for multiple business needs, such as allocation management, compliance monitoring, flood warnings, water resource assessment and river health management.

The Victorian Government will continue working closely with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) through the RWMP and the Flood Warning Infrastructure Network (FWIN). The Commonwealth Government will invest \$236 million nationally over the next 10 years through the FWIN to acquire, upgrade and share the ongoing maintenance of high priority flood warning assets.

The current scope of the FWIN program in Victoria will facilitate the partial transfer of ownership responsibility of some high priority flood warnings gauges from 2027-28. This program will not

include the transfer of all public gauges as noted in recommendation 41, however, the remaining flood warning gauges will continue under current arrangements. The Victorian Government will work with the FWIN implementation team and BoM to provide a public update on the transfer timelines.

The Victorian Government is focused on identifying and addressing critical gaps in Victoria's gauge network by installing new gauges in priority locations and upgrading existing gauges with telemetry services. The government will achieve this through the VFMS, regional floodplain management strategies, and local flood studies. Together these provide a robust framework for identifying and filling gaps in the network. To date, the VFMS has invested \$1.45 million into the gauge networks that support flood warning systems, including the installation of new gauges and upgrading telemetry services to bolster the community and the BoM's access to reliable data in real-time. A pool of compact portable river monitoring gauges is also maintained that can be quickly installed on an as needed basis to monitor changes in river heights. The BoM website will remain the principal source of publicly accessible gauge data.

6.2 Flood emergency warning system enhancements

The Victorian Warning System provides critical information and warnings to communities during emergencies, including through:

- VicEmergency – VicEmergency provides a centralised location for Victorians to access timely emergency information and warnings.
- Emergency broadcasters – The Victorian Government has formal arrangements for the broadcast of community warnings and information to the community. This can also include broadcasting through social media channels.
- Emergency Alert – Emergency Alert is used to send a voice message to landline telephones and a text message to mobile phones.
- Local automated warning systems – These include community sirens, speakers and roadside signage.
- Face-to-face – This includes door knocking, community meetings, and virtual 'town hall' meetings conducted over live radio or web feeds such as Zoom.

These key principles underpin the Victorian warning system, and the system's application:

- Warnings must be tailored – warnings are required to include specific details about the emergency and likely or actual impacts on the community. Where possible, input of local knowledge is required.
- Warnings must be timely – warnings must be authorised as a priority, with initial information issued in the shortest time practicable and updates provided in a timely manner. Warnings should be updated regularly.
- Warnings must be relevant – warnings must contain explicit information about severity, location, predicted direction and the likelihood of impact on communities. Advice on protective actions should be relevant to the incident and community impacted.
- Warnings must be accessible – warnings must be provided through multiple channels and in plain language.

The Final Report recommended that the Victorian Government also ensure the emergency warning system is inclusive and should be usable by all Victorians. The Victorian Government acknowledges the integral role of public information and warnings in emergency response and is continuing to implement improvements to the Victorian system.

Therefore, since the flood event, the Victorian Government has worked to improve the emergency warnings system. These improvements included the delivery of a pilot project that develops real-time translations of community warnings for the VicEmergency service, as well as some accessibility enhancements. For example, the pilot project successfully translated relevant information into Arabic and Simplified Chinese¹ in real-time.

In December 2024 the Victorian Government announced it will invest \$53 million in a modernised VicEmergency app and the central database for emergency services, Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (EM-COP). This significant investment will provide strong foundations to ensure that, now and into the future, the community is given timely, accurate and accessible advice during disaster. This will also enable the app to be translated into different languages, ensuring a wider range of multicultural communities have the information they need to keep themselves and their families safe.

Findings from the Final Report also indicate that certain communities received delayed or inaccurate information from the VicEmergency service, making it more difficult for them to make informed decisions. Recognising this issue, VICSES has secured funding from the Commonwealth Government through the DRF to deliver the 'Consequence-Based, Intelligence-Driven Warnings' project which will provide more timely, tailored and relevant warnings during flood and storm emergencies.

6.3 Addressing telecommunication infrastructure and digital connectivity challenges

The Final Report noted that there is a growing societal reliance on digital forms of communication. However, in rural and remote areas, this reliance can cause challenges as connectivity issues could impede the communication of emergency warnings using digital mediums.

The Final Report also found that where the flood event impacted telecommunication infrastructure, there were significant delays in restoring digital connectivity. The Final Report recommended that given the essential role of digital connectivity in emergency management and response, the Victorian Government, working with the Commonwealth Government as necessary, address connectivity limitations, focusing on rural and remote areas.

The Victorian Government has advocated for significant national reforms and improvements to telecommunications to address the issues identified in the Final Report and beyond. These efforts include:

- advocacy at a national level to increase sector capability during emergencies. This includes advocating for policy to fix digital connectivity gaps and ensure telecommunications infrastructure can provide resilient and reliable communications during emergencies. These advocacy themes are reflected in Victoria's submission to the Commonwealth Government's 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review (RTR), which is available from the Department of Government Services (DGS) on request.
- Victorian Government investment to deliver more accessible and resilient telecommunications services via programs like Connecting Victoria and participation in Commonwealth Government funding programs.
- Partnering with the Commonwealth Government and industry to deliver 243 new mobile base stations across the state as part of mobile black spot funding rounds, investment in

¹ Simplified Chinese characters are one of two standardised character sets widely used to write the Chinese language, with the other being traditional characters.

211 projects to improve the resilience of mobile towers, co-funding 27 new base stations in peri-urban areas at risk of disaster and supporting the rollout of 343 community satellite/Wi-Fi facilities located at emergency relief/recovery centres across regional Victoria.

- Partnering with the Commonwealth Government to deliver Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB) which aims to modernise Australia's critical communications capabilities by providing critical mobile broadband services. PSMB will also enhance the operational effectiveness of public safety agencies and their personnel to enable them to meet the growing expectations of the community, saving lives and property and improving user safety. It is anticipated that PSMB will be delivered by the end of 2026.

These efforts are supported by the Victorian Government's Connecting Victoria program, which is funding the delivery of new and upgraded telecommunications services through 1,400 broadband and mobile projects across the state, including over 950 projects in regional Victoria. These services will be progressively switched on, with all projects planned for completion by June 2026.

6.4 Ensuring community awareness of flood risks

Embedded in the Victorian Preparedness Framework (VPF) is the notion that emergency management is a shared responsibility across all of Victoria's diverse communities, Victoria's First Peoples, community groups, networks, businesses, individuals, households, visitors to Victoria, government and non-government organisations, and the emergency management sector.

The Final Report found that during the flood event there was a persistent underestimation of risk by the community and in response recommended the Victorian Government establish long-term community awareness initiatives to ensure the public understands flood risk and actions.

As noted in Chapter 3, VICSES has received funding from the Commonwealth Government through Round Two of the DRF to develop age-appropriate session plans and guidance material on flood and storm risk safety for students. However, the Victorian Government understands that more can be done to ensure the public understands flood risks and relevant actions, as well as their responsibilities under Victoria's current emergency management arrangements.

In early 2024, two brand new public awareness campaigns were launched on the VICSES website and on its social media platforms. The campaigns address floods ('If you don't know, don't go') and storms ('Are you storm ready?') and provide advice on how to stay safe during these natural hazards.

In addition, in 2025 the Victorian Government will launch a public awareness campaign encouraging the uptake of appropriate insurance for Victorian homeowners. This campaign will be delivered through a partnership model with councils and key emergency management agencies, using existing relationships to ensure communities receive tailored resources. Communication material will be developed in collaboration with councils, and customised to meet local needs

VICSES also undertakes on average around 1,200 local community engagement initiatives each year with around 30 per cent of those primarily focussed on emergency weather preparedness for floods and storms across Victoria.

The Victorian Government will continue to support VICSES in their work to improve community awareness of floods and other natural hazards, noting that the expansion of existing initiatives or the commencement of new ones will require additional investment and be subject to standard budgetary processes.

7. Resourcing and response of the Victoria State Emergency Service

Chapter 7 of the Final Report provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the VICSES as well as its capability, capacity and resourcing. It documents the response roles and services performed by the VICSES and other emergency services organisations during the flood event and provides an assessment of the adequacy of the response. The report notes the commitment and resilience of the VICSES, whose service to the community during the flood event was undertaken by dedicated staff and volunteers. In many cases, VICSES responders were personally impacted by the flood event but continued to provide crucial support to their communities through the response.

Recommendations from Chapter 7 of the Final Report address:

- ensuring adequate funding for the VICSES and other emergency services; and
- ensuring adequate arrangements for the distribution of sandbags, flood rescue and the incorporation of local expertise within incident control centres.

7.1 Ensuring adequate funding for the VICSES and other emergency services

The Victorian Government recognises that emergency services volunteers are there when they are needed most, protecting our communities and saving lives. In recent years, VICSES and other emergency services have experienced growing and more complex demands for their services due to the increasing frequency, severity, and duration of natural disasters. In the context of the VICSES, these increased demands impact volunteers and their ability to deliver services safely and effectively.

To make sure emergency services have what they need to keep Victorians safe, the Victorian Government announced in December 2024 that it would provide more than \$250 million to support CFA and VICSES volunteers across the state.

As part of this major funding package:

- the Victorian Government will invest \$70 million to establish a rolling fleet replacement program for VICSES and the CFA – ensuring new and upgraded trucks, tankers and pumpers;
- the annual Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) will be doubled with more than \$62 million additional funding provided over the next four years to ensure more volunteers have new or upgraded vehicles, equipment and better station facilities;
- the Victorian Government will invest almost \$30 million to deliver training and support programs to help upskill and train more volunteers, with a further \$20 million to address critical VICSES costs relating to unit subsidies, maintenance and training;
- as outlined in Section 6.2, as part of this funding package, the Victorian Government will also invest \$53 million in a modernised VicEmergency app and the central database for our emergency services, EM-COP.

Over the last five years, the Victorian Government has provided \$23.3 million to VICSES to support the replacement of 56 Heavy Rescue and 7 Medium Rescue trucks. An additional \$145.3 million was also provided to VICSES to develop 14 fit-for-purpose facilities, including four new VICSES units in growth corridors.

In addition to the funding announced in December 2024, the 2024/25 Victorian Budget allocated more than \$6.9 million to support VICSES volunteers with Incident Management Team (IMT) training and a volunteer support program. Additional staff trainers have had contracts extended to run support volunteer training programs over the next 12 months.

The Victorian Government also acknowledges the significant support provided by councils through the provision of land and facilities used by VICSES units. Under the Victorian Government - Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2017, municipal councils use their best endeavours to provide land for VICSES units at nominal or 'peppercorn' rent of \$1 per year. The Victorian Government is working with the MAV to refresh this MoU and reaffirm the parties' commitments to its original intent in recognition of the significant community benefit it provides.

The Final Report recommended that the Victorian Government increase funding to the Shepparton and Echuca and Moama Search and Rescue squads, to ensure optimal response capabilities in future emergencies. These squads played an instrumental role assisting their local community during the 2022 flood event. Since 2015, the Victorian Government has provided the Shepparton and Echuca Moama Search and Rescue squads with more than \$1,100,000 through the VESEP. VESEP is an annual grant program that supports Victorian emergency services volunteer groups to purchase equipment or make minor improvements to facilities which enable their vital work.

The Victorian Government will continue to engage closely with VICSES and other emergency services agencies to consider their funding needs in line with annual budgetary processes.

7.2 Ensuring adequate arrangements for the distribution of sandbags, flood rescue and for the incorporation of local expertise within incident control centres

VICSES played an integral role in the response to the flood event, with its volunteers working tirelessly to strengthen flood defences, evacuate communities and respond to requests for assistance.

The flood event also saw an unprecedented demand for sandbag deployment. During the event, VICSES deployed its full stock of available sandbags and worked with local providers to secure material and increase capacity at short notice. These efforts culminated in the deployment of an estimated 1.5 million sandbags to impacted areas.

The Final Report recommends improvements are made to the management and distribution of sandbags, such as ensuring there is a sufficient supply of sandbags available for preparation for floods in a wet year. Since the flood event, VICSES has increased its stock of available sandbags to over 1.48 million in preparation for high-risk weather periods. VICSES has also increased the number of sandbag storage locations with strategic stakeholders, including councils in high-risk areas. VICSES will continue to evaluate its distribution arrangements to ensure the deployment of sandbags in a timely manner.

The Final Report has recommended that the Victorian Government develop a strategic rescue plan in areas with a high risk of flooding, so that they have appropriate resources and expertise for rescues during a crisis event. VICSES volunteers participated in more than 1500 flood rescues in support of Victoria Police, the control agency for water rescue. The Victorian Government will further consider this recommendation and seek advice from Victoria Police and VICSES on potential improvements to response plans at regional and municipal levels, capability, and capacity, noting that the implementation of any plans would require additional investment and be subject to standard budgetary processes.

The response to the flood event was supported by members of impacted communities whose knowledge and expertise provided critical guidance to response efforts. The Final Report recommends that the Victorian Government ensure that incident control centres include a mechanism for local expertise to be included in their operations and help inform processes to assist managing localised warnings and response. The Victorian Government and its emergency services acknowledge the critical role the local community and their knowledge plays in emergencies - not only in response, but also the recovery from emergencies. As part of the regular review cycle of operational doctrine, EMV, along with response agencies, will ensure the inclusion of local expertise into incident management operations is referenced. This includes reinforcing the use of local expertise in IMTs and emphasising the role councils and their personnel play in contributing to developing incident strategies and managing an emergency.

8. Flood relief and recovery

Chapter 8 of the Final Report provides insight into the important role of Emergency Relief Centres and Recovery Hubs. The chapter also details relevant recovery initiatives funded as part of the 2024/25 Victorian Budget, the challenges flood-affected individuals had with obtaining financial assistance and the experiences of those living in temporary accommodation.

Recommendations in Chapter 8 of the Final Report address:

- ensuring the effective operation of Emergency Relief Centres and Recovery Hubs;
- Ensuring effective arrangements for clean-up and debris management;
- ensuring displaced households have access to emergency and temporary accommodation;
- ensuring displaced households have access to emergency and temporary accommodation
- supporting access to disaster recovery funding
- Ensuring residents and businesses in flood-affected areas can obtain and maintain necessary insurance
- Efforts to address the restoration of the natural environment

8.1 Ensuring the effective operation of emergency relief centres and recovery hubs

The Victorian Government recognises the critical role councils play in facilitating the state's emergency management arrangements, including the establishment of Emergency Relief Centres (ERC), which provide immediate and basic services to people affected by an emergency.

Councils undertake emergency management planning, including the development and maintenance of municipal-level ERC standard operating procedures. Some councils, through regional partnerships or collaborations, have developed regional standard operating procedures for ERCs, and other clusters of regional councils are considering a similar approach.

The Final Report recommends that the Victorian Government work with councils to establish statewide operating guidelines for ERCs. DGS will develop this state-level guidance, building on the knowledge and expertise of councils, and the guidance will address areas requiring greater clarity to support councils in delivering this critical function for community during an emergency. The state-level guidance is planned to be published in June 2026.

Like ERCs, Recovery Hubs are also a valuable resource and location for communities to visit in order to support their recovery needs. Recovery Hubs are a recent initiative from the state and

have helped increase the capacity of the existing recovery centre process of councils. Recovery Hubs work to ensure community recovery needs are well understood, so evidence-based recovery interventions can be targeted with the greatest benefit. These hubs also provide trauma-informed navigation of recovery services, information, and programs to support communities in recovery.

The Final Report recommends that the Victorian Government plan and resource recovery hubs (including online access) sufficiently to fulfil their role in long-term community recovery and resilience building. Following the flood event, the Community Recovery Hub program allocated funding to eligible councils, alpine resorts, and Aboriginal led organisations to establish integrated Community Recovery Hubs. Programs like these remain eligible for financial support under the Commonwealth Government's DRFA. Municipal Recovery Committees determine the location and composition of these hubs to ensure they are located in areas of greatest benefit to their communities.

8.2 Ensuring effective arrangements for clean-up and debris management

The prompt clean-up and disposal of disaster debris and waste is recognised as critical in enabling broader community, land, infrastructure and economic recovery. The Final Report recommends that the Victorian Government collaborate with local authorities and community groups to develop and implement a debris management strategy and ensure that it aligns with broader disaster management plans as part of future-proofing for environmental events.

The Victorian Government is committed to continually improving its response to and recovery from disasters. During the flood event, the Victorian Government partnered with local council and used the Mt Scobie Resource Recovery Centre in Kyabram as a centralised debris sorting, recycling and disposal facility. This partnership enabled the rapid removal of debris and waste to be facilitated across the entire affected area as well as the appropriate management of recyclable materials.

8.3 Ensuring displaced households have access to emergency and temporary accommodation

Following disasters, temporarily housing large volumes of people is a challenge often unique to the location of the event. Accommodation needs are also specific to the scale of the event, including pre-existing accommodation challenges which can be exacerbated by the impacts of the event. However, ensuring those displaced from their homes have access to emergency or temporary accommodation immediately after an event is one of the Victorian Government's top priorities; recognising that those who have been displaced would be experiencing significant distress, trauma and loss.

The Victorian Government's approach to supporting emergency or temporary accommodation needs is designed in response to the specific challenges presented by each event. In the case of the flood event, facilities such as the Elmore Events Centre and COVID Centre for National Resilience were repurposed to provide suitable emergency or temporary accommodation to house impacted households.

The Final Report recommended that the Victorian Government assess the application system for emergency or temporary accommodation to ensure that genuinely affected households receive support in a timelier manner and to mitigate the risk of fraudulent claims. While the Victorian Government understands the importance of mitigating fraudulent claims for accommodation, this must be balanced against providing genuinely displaced households easily accessible and timely emergency or temporary accommodation. Following the flood event, the eligibility criteria for emergency or temporary accommodation was initially and deliberately broad to ensure all impacted individuals and families were housed and supported to address the acute need, with the

eligibility criteria later amended to mitigate the risk of fraudulent claims once the program was better established.

As programs such as these are delivered, program eligibility criteria is monitored to ensure supports remain fit for purpose and addresses areas of greatest need within the parameters of the funding provisions.

8.4 Supporting access to disaster recovery funding

Following recent events, individuals, households and small businesses have received support with applying for and accessing disaster recovery funding through the Recovery Support Program and Business Relief Advisory Service.

The Recovery Support Program played a crucial role in linking individuals with the broader recovery system, functioning as a 'front door' for residents, helping them access trauma-informed support, case management, and advice across their recovery journey. Importantly, it enabled other recovery services to reach impacted populations and ensured informed decision-making for agencies involved in broader recovery efforts.

8.5 Ensuring residents and businesses in flood-affected areas can obtain and maintain necessary insurance

Support from insurance providers is recognised as a key issue for many homeowners and businesses following a disaster. It is challenging for some policy owners to access the full extent of their insurance payments following protracted negotiations with insurance providers. Complicating this further is the heightened demand on insurers following a disaster, which extends wait times for information and delays advice on what is claimable under each policy and the evidence required to demonstrate impact.

The Final Report recommends that following the outcomes of the House of Representatives' Inquiry into insurers' responses to 2022 major floods claims, the Victorian Government advocates for the Commonwealth Government to take action to ensure that residents and businesses in flood-affected areas can obtain and maintain necessary insurance.

The Victorian Government regularly and consistently communicates these challenges to industry groups. The Victorian Government also maintains a standing relationship with the Insurance Council of Australia to assist in coordinating insurance-related engagements and communicating issues and emerging risks during events. Additionally, and as noted in the Inquiry into insurers' responses to 2022 major floods claims report, the regulation of the consumer insurance industry is a Commonwealth matter. However, the Victorian Government's efforts to seek improved insurance outcomes for those impacted by disasters is highlighted throughout this report, with Victoria – the only jurisdiction to do so – advocating into the Commonwealth review.

8.6 Efforts to address the restoration of the natural environment

The flood event impacted on 19 Traditional Owner Groups across the state, including five Recognised Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and 14 non-formally recognised Traditional Owner groups. The event also had a devastating impact on the natural environment.

The Final Report recommended that the Victorian Government, noting that repair of natural environment is often overlooked in disaster recovery, assess and make funding available for natural environment and restoration. However, the Victorian Government has provided \$158 million to support urgent and immediate flood recovery works on public land across the state. This includes:

- \$14.4 million in flood recovery grants provided to 129 volunteer Committees of Management to manage the recovery of valued community assets on public land.
- Environmental assessment of 29 contaminated land sites.
- Over 700 threatened species assessments.
- More than 2,000 hectares of terrestrial weed control in flood-affected areas, and over 580,000 native fish stocked in waterways in northern Victoria.
- Reopening more than 920 kilometres of public land roads and over 200 recreation sites on public land.
- Supporting Traditional Owner Groups with flood recovery funding and engaging with them on priority flood impacted sites through surveying cultural heritage values and rehabilitation works



9. Appendix

This response has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Victorian Government Submissions and Responses to Inquiries. The following key sets out the five categories of response, which are consistent with the Guidelines.

Support in Full - All elements of the recommendation are supported.

Support in Part - Some elements of the recommendation are supported.

Support in Principle - The Victorian Government generally supports the intent or merit of the policy underlining the recommendation but does not necessarily support the method for achieving the policy.

Under review - Further analysis is required for the Victorian Government to determine its position

Not support - The Victorian Government does not support the recommendation.

Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
Victoria's flood governance arrangements			
<p>1. That, following a significant natural disaster such as the 2022 flood, the Inspector-General for Emergency Management conduct a review at an appropriate time to provide feedback for continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Not support</p>	<p>The Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) was established under the <i>Emergency Management Act 2013 (EM Act)</i>. IGEM plays an integral role in Victoria's emergency management sector by providing assurance to the government and the community regarding emergency management arrangements and fostering the continuous improvement of emergency management in Victoria.</p> <p>Section 64(1)(b) of the <i>EM Act</i> provides IGEM with the power to conduct system-wide reviews at an appropriate time to provide feedback for continuous improvement. IGEM's review activities are broader in scope than individual post-event reviews and focus on system-wide emergency management arrangements, as well as the sector's preparedness, performance, capacity and capability. This allows IGEM to identify system-level insights with transferable learnings for all hazards and emergencies.</p>	<p>EMV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>Under the <i>EM Act</i>, IGEM has discretion to determine what reviews they undertake. Separate to IGEM, there are alternative government mechanisms available to review specific events, such as after action reviews or parliamentary inquiries. The Victorian Government commits to continuing to support IGEM to enable it to manage its independent role in providing sector assurance.</p>	
<p>2. That the Victorian Government confirm the powers of the Inspector-General for Emergency Management to undertake reviews on a self-referral basis or, if such powers do not exist, to legislate to provide these powers.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The Victorian Government confirms that the Inspector General for Emergency Management (IGEM) currently has the power to undertake systemwide reviews on a self-referral basis, provided any proposed review is included in the IGEM's annual forward plan of reviews before it is carried out and is consistent with the objective to foster continuous improvement of emergency management.</p> <p>Section 64(1)(b) of the <i>EM Act</i> empowers the IGEM to undertake system-wide reviews, including reviewing the emergency management functions of responder agencies and departments in relation to the assurance framework.</p>	<p>EMV</p>
<p>3. That the Victorian Government consider all the evidence, findings and recommendations from this Report when developing a new Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (VFMS).</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government has allocated funding to review and refresh the VFMS. This review will commence in 2025 and the relevant evidence, findings and recommendations detailed in the Final Report will be considered where appropriate.</p> <p>The VFMS has informed consistent decisions and actions for the management of flood-related issues since its release in 2016. The VFMS's 56 Actions have been tracked, and three biennial implementation reports (snapshots) have been published. An independent audit by Ernst Young in 2020 determined that the Victorian Government had established clear governance structures to engage delivery partners in the VFMS's implementation.</p> <p>After-Action Reviews were coordinated in 2023 by the Victorian Government to test agency understanding and attitudes to floodplain</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		management policy as applied during the 2022 October flood event. Outcomes confirm that there is a high level of acceptance of policy relating to key issues – and there is also support for reassessment of several aspects.	
4. That the new Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (VFMS) detail the coordination responsibility of the Victorian Government to ensure all flood studies for all local government areas are fully funded and completed.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government acknowledges the need to fund and complete flood studies to manage risk. These studies are coordinated by Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs), councils and VICSES jointly to ensure studies are prioritised with consideration of local resources and available industry expertise to prepare modelling.</p> <p>The VFMS outlines that planning for future flood risks and prioritising actions to manage flood risks is best implemented at a local level, with funding provided and coordinated at a state level. Managing flood risk is a shared responsibility and the Victorian Government's role is to support the coordination of efforts to fund new flood studies to ensure communities understand their flood risk.</p> <p>Since the completion of the regional floodplain management strategy process in 2018, regionally agreed strategy implementation plans have guided the Victorian Government's investment into new flood studies for regional communities.</p>	DEECA
5. That the Victorian Government make public the internal, de-identified after-action review conducted by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.	Support in principle	DEECA has published the executive summary of the AAR on its website to ensure that key learnings are shared with the public while allowing the principles of AARs, which asks staff and stakeholders to provide frank and honest feedback, to remain intact for staff and agencies for future emergency events and AARs.	DEECA
6. That the Victorian Government clearly state the operational role and responsibilities of each emergency service in preparation for a flood	Support in principle	The State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) provides for an integrated, coordinated and comprehensive approach to emergency management at the state level. The SEMP contains provisions providing for the mitigation of, response to and recovery from	EMV



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>emergency, outlining the appropriate chain of command, communication protocols, and engagement with the local community.</p>		<p>emergencies (before, during and after), and specifies the roles and responsibilities of agencies in relation to emergency management. In addition to the SEMP, there are Regional Emergency Management Plans (REMPs), which contextualise the SEMP for Victoria’s regions, and Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs), which contextualise REMPs for municipalities and are informed by local risks.</p> <p>Supporting the SEMP is the SEMP Flood sub-plan, which outlines the Victorian arrangements for managing floods across all emergency management phases. The current version, edition 3, is currently being reviewed and is due for publication in 2025. VICSES, as the control agency for flood emergencies, is leading this review on behalf of the Emergency Management Commissioner. Through the review process, VICSES will, in collaboration with all relevant agencies, explore opportunities to more clearly articulate the existing roles and responsibilities established through this sub-plan.</p> <p>In addition to its review of the SEMP Flood sub-plan, VICSES also maintains the currency of 7 REMP Flood sub-plans and 79 MEMP flood sub-plans. These sub-plans seek to define more specific flood arrangements, including the flood management roles and responsibilities of organisations relevant to specific regions or municipalities.</p>	
Planning and flood risk			
<p>7. That the Victorian Government ensure regional catchment management authorities, with local councils, are funded and resourced to conduct and implement up to date flood studies on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Regional floodplain management strategy implementation plans will continue to guide Victorian Government investment into new flood studies for regional communities.</p> <p>Regional priority flood studies will be funded through the Victorian Government's Flood Reclamation Roadmap initiative, announced in</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>May 2023, and directed towards funding 32 previously unfunded flood studies by 2028.</p> <p>In regional Victoria, with adequate funding support, councils usually lead the development of flood studies in alignment with regional priorities, and with technical support and input from Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and local VICSES. Where a flood study crosses multiple council boundaries, a CMA may take the lead in partnership with the councils. This arrangement recognises the associated benefits arising from councils' existing relationships with communities and their role in administering and enforcing planning schemes and provisions.</p> <p>For the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment, Melbourne Water has a program underway to complete all flood modelling by 2026. This program is jointly funded by councils, as well as Melbourne Water customers through the Waterways & Drainage Charge in water bills. The funding has been secured through Melbourne Water's 2021 Waterways & Drainage Investment Program, endorsed by the Essential Services Commission and approved by the Minister for Water.</p> <p>The Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy acknowledges that resourcing capacity for councils to lead or, in the Melbourne Water area, partner to deliver flood studies can be variable, with smaller councils likely requiring more support.</p>	
<p>8. That the Victorian Government require peer review of publicly funded flood modelling as part of the next Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (VFMS).</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Independent expert reviews of flood studies help ensure that best practice modelling, analysis and mapping has been used.</p> <p>DEECA (formerly the Department for Environment Land Water and Planning or DELWP) prepared the Victorian Flood Data and Mapping Guidelines for the delivery of government-funded flood studies, which detailed the advantages of ensuring studies are independently reviewed. With the guidelines published in 2016, they are due for a</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>refresh to align with accountabilities, policies and actions set out in the next VFMS and in alignment with the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP).</p> <p>The review of the VFMS, due to commence in 2025, will continue to support the peer review of flood studies. Current and future funds advanced to councils for flood studies will include funding for peer review, which should be undertaken by a qualified expert. Technical support for the flood studies will continue to be provided by the relevant Catchment Management Authority (CMA).</p> <p>In the case of Melbourne Water, its flood modelling and mapping program includes peer and technical reviews during several development and final project deliverable stages.</p>	
<p>9. That Melbourne Water and other floodplain management authorities review flood models every 5 years, and update the models at least every 10 years and after the occurrence of a major flood.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>A review of the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (VFMS) and Victorian Flood Data and Mapping Guidelines will incorporate an agreed, practical standard for a regular review cycle for flood studies. In some areas, where conditions remain relatively unchanged and consequence is low, a review may conclude that updating the model is a lower priority. Conversely, the occurrence of a major flood may trigger a review and update of the model outside of the agreed review cycle.</p> <p>Flood studies are a snapshot at the point in time when they were created. Available topographic data (e.g. LiDAR) resolution and technological advances (modelling capability) improve accuracy over time. Changes in the landscape, climate variables and projections, mapping techniques, development and other changes in the landscape mean that the studies and their flood maps may require updating.</p> <p>For Melbourne Water, this action is underway, with all models to be updated initially by 2026. Following the initial reviews, the models will have ongoing reviews every 5 years at a minimum and renewal at a minimum of every 10 years, which is consistent with the Independent</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>Review Panel. Renewal may occur earlier in some cases, such as where a major flood event offers new insights that can further enhance the modelling.</p> <p>Decisions on when to renew flood mapping may vary and must meet the needs of stakeholders. The Victorian Government notes that while high risk areas may require flood studies to be reviewed on a 5 year basis and updated on a 10 year frequency, many low risk areas with limited development or change will not require studies to be completed at this frequency.</p>	
<p>10. That the Victorian Government provide Victorians with access to appropriate data contained within the FloodZoom platform.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>FloodZoom is a technical platform which allows trained Flood Analysts to access flood mapping and documents in conjunction with near real-time stream and rain gauge data during a flood event to inform flood response.</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the public having access to appropriate data contained within the FloodZoom platform. In December 2023, the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood extents across Regional Victoria were made publicly accessible after being published on Digital Twin Victoria (DTV).</p> <p>Scoping is currently underway to expand flood mapping to include metropolitan Melbourne and additional layers (such as flood depth). Further work to allow the next generation of individual property flood reports is also underway. Technical aspects of these proposals are being fully investigated to ensure accuracy and ease of use. If assessed as feasible, this work will commence in mid-2025.</p> <p>The DTV platform will not be an emergency information provider. During times of high flood risk, users will be referred to the VicEmergency site as a single point of truth. The VicEmergency website provides information during a flood about current forecasts, flood warnings, rainfall, stream levels and flood impacts such as evacuations and road closures.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>Key stakeholders including the DTV team (in the Department of Transport and Planning), the Catchment Management Authorities, Melbourne Water and VICSES have been, and continue to be, engaged throughout the project.</p>	
<p>11. That the Victorian Government introduce amendments to the Sale of Land Act 1962 (Vic) to require vendor disclosure statements to include a simple statement on flood risk. In addition, houses or dwellings previously flooded must be included in any vendor declaration statement.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The Sale of Land Act 1962 (SoLA) already requires disclosure by a vendor to a prospective purchaser where the vendor has knowledge of any occurrence of previous flooding of the property for sale. Failure to comply with this requirement is an offence.</p> <p>Further consideration will be given to amending the SoLA to introduce a specific statutory disclosure requirement by vendors on flood risk. DGS will work with Emergency Management Victoria, the State Emergency Service, Melbourne Water and Catchment Management Authorities to identify the most appropriate statewide source of flood risk information that will be equally accessible to all vendors (and purchasers) regardless of locality.</p> <p>It should be noted that the SoLA includes a statutory requirement for a vendor to provide prospective purchasers with a Due Diligence Checklist in a form approved by the Director of Consumer Affairs Victoria. The approved form checklist includes a high-level statement on flood and bushfire risk and advises prospective purchasers to properly investigate those risks and consider their implications for land management, buildings and insurance premiums. The checklist is supplemented by links on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website to relevant sources where prospective purchasers can locate flood risk information.</p> <p>Work will also be undertaken in 2025, as part of implementing the Housing Statement rental reforms, to introduce a requirement for rental providers to provide information on flood risk and mandatory disclosure of previous flooding to prospective renters (where known by a residential rental provider) as part of the rental application process.</p>	<p>DGS</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>12. That Emergency Management Victoria work with local government authorities and local State Emergency Service units to provide access to local flood guides to all residents in a flood zone, that identify the likely flood impacts on individual properties.</p>	<p>Support in part</p>	<p>Local Flood Guides (LFGs) are currently available for over 150 communities, providing localised flood risk information and information to community members on how to prepare for a flood and stay safe. LFGs are made available on the VICSES website and are often promoted through VICSES social media channels. VICSES volunteers also engage with their local communities on their relevant LFG.</p> <p>In recognition of the changing needs of Victorian communities and the need for enhanced community-specific information delivery, the Victorian Government commenced the LFG Enhancement Project in May 2023.</p> <p>The LFG Enhancement Project sought to modernise and optimise LFGs through the introduction of a new template that was informed by extensive research and consultation. These changes aim to bolster preparedness, and facilitate more effective decision-making during flood events, ultimately strengthening the resilience of Victorian communities.</p> <p>The revised LFG template was finalised and endorsed in June 2024. The Victorian Government has transitioned existing LFGs to the new template with updated LFGs being published in line with their review cycle.</p> <p>Melbourne Water is supplying VICSES with the latest available flood risk data as each new flood modelling project is completed across the Greater Melbourne region. Subsequent updates to LFGs will occur within existing VICSES resources.</p> <p>However, the Victorian Government is cognisant that in the future the intensity and frequency of climate extremes is likely to increase. Thus, the continued provision of contemporary LFGs to all communities in current and future flood zones would require</p>	<p>VICSES</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>additional investment which would be subject to standard budgetary processes.</p> <p>Additionally, while LFGs currently provide a valuable source of flood risk information, improving communications technologies and community technological literacy may be more effective alternatives to the LFG. The Victorian Government will continue to work with relevant organisations to consider the best method to deliver information to communities about their local flood risk.</p>	
<p>13. That the Victorian Government improve individual and community awareness about their own roles and responsibilities in emergency management, and make available information resources for preparing for flood and other emergencies.</p>	<p>Under review</p>	<p>The 'Plan and Stay Safe' section on the VICSES website contains information on how individuals can prepare for floods.</p> <p>VICSES produces and maintains community engagement material relating to flooding and other control hazards. It also maintains sandbagging guidance material and LFGs.</p> <p>Additionally, VICSES received funding from the Commonwealth as part of Round 2 of the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) for a Flood and Storm Education Project. This project will develop age-appropriate session plans and guidance material on flood and storm risk safety for students and will be developed in 2025.</p> <p>Further investment would be required to uplift the flood-safety campaign 'You don't know, so don't go' and flood behaviour-change campaigns '15 to Float' or 'Be flood ready: Bag it, block it, lift it and leave'. This further investment would facilitate the ongoing and sustained building of community flood awareness, and enable timely activation of campaigns in times of high risk. This investment would be subject to standard budgetary processes.</p>	<p>VICSES</p>
<p>14. That the Victorian Government require the emergency management sector to ensure that the needs of vulnerable communities including people with disability are included in</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Vulnerable persons and those with a disability are a critical consideration in Victoria's emergency management preparedness, response, relief and recovery planning. These considerations are embedded in a range of Victorian Government policies and frameworks.</p>	<p>EMV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>all disaster preparation and response plans and ensure that sufficient funding is available to make all disaster emergency responses inclusive for people with disability.</p>		<p>The <i>Vulnerable People in Emergencies Policy (2018)</i>, is designed to improve the safety of vulnerable people in emergencies by facilitating emergency planning with vulnerable people, developing local registers of vulnerable people to support emergency evacuation planning and operations and maintaining a list of locations and facilities where vulnerable people are likely to be located to support emergency evacuations. Eligible councils are funded to undertake basic system administration and local oversight of the Vulnerable Persons Registers and the Vulnerable Facilities Lists, which support local planning.</p> <p>In May 2024, the Victorian Government released the <i>Victorian Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for People Most at Risk</i> (the Planning Toolkit), which was co-designed with a range of stakeholders and emergency management experts. The Planning Toolkit aims to support Victoria’s emergency management planning to be more dynamic and situation-based, with a focus on people who are most at risk in specific circumstances.</p> <p>The Victorian Government also maintains the <i>Inclusive Victoria – State Disability Plan (2022-26)</i>, which sets out actions to help the Victorian Government meet its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also an implementation plan for achieving outcomes under Australia’s disability strategy (2021–2031). Actions include identifying pathways to increase the representation of people with disability, their families and experts in municipal, regional and state-level emergency management planning, and improving accessibility and representation of people with disability in public communications provided through Emergency Management Victoria.</p> <p>The updated Minister’s Guidelines for preparing State, Regional and Municipal Emergency Management Plans, which were released in October 2024, also provide a planning objective that plans recognise the importance of shared responsibility for emergency management</p>	



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		planning with a focus on people most at risk in emergencies, through collaboration amongst agencies and with communities.	
15. That the Victorian Government provide flood risk and planning information in a way that is appropriately accessible to people with additional needs, including people with disability	Under review	While VICSES has progressed easy-English and translated flood preparedness material for the public, the expansion of this work to better address the accessibility needs of community members, including those with a disability, would require additional investment and would be subject to standard budgetary processes.	EMV
16. That the Victorian Government ensure early warning systems include consideration of a voluntary register of people in need of additional support to receive early warning and support during natural disasters.	Under review	<p>The Victorian Government understands that members of Victorian communities require varying levels of support during natural disasters.</p> <p>Analysis would be required to understand how a voluntary registration system to receive early warnings and additional support during natural disasters could be developed. Analysis would also be required to understand its implication on operational planning and service delivery services such as the Vulnerable Persons Register, Victorian Disability Plan and the Victorian Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for People Most at Risk.</p> <p>Such analysis would need to consider the potential for an additional register to create duplication of effort, or confusion for agencies who use the information from registers for response purposes. There will also be considerations for the work of Regional Emergency Management Planning Committees and Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees, who share responsibility for at risk and vulnerable groups from a planning perspective.</p> <p>There may be scope to review current arrangements from a whole of sector perspective and consider funding to resolve the operational, technical and financial requirements.</p>	EMV
17. That the Victorian Government fast-track the implementation of	Support in principle	DTP will work with floodplain management authorities and councils to explore options to further improve efficiency to achieve updates to	DTP



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>flood studies into planning schemes. This should be done cooperatively with local councils and relevant stakeholders, group together flood studies into regional amendments, and use the Minister for Planning's powers as required, within two years of completion.</p>		<p>planning scheme flood controls within two years from completion of flood studies. This may involve legislative and governance changes, along with expanding the scope of current initiatives and consideration of interim flood controls.</p> <p>DTP has established the <i>Regional Flood-related Amendments Program</i> to support regional councils accelerate the updating of planning schemes with maps and other data from a backlog of completed flood studies which is currently in progress.</p> <p>The program creates efficiencies through resourcing councils and providing DTP assistance from a team with dedicated regional flood amendment expertise. This program is funded to mid-2025.</p> <p>The Minister for Planning appointed the <i>Flood-related Amendment Standing Advisory Committee</i> which can be accessed by both metropolitan and regional councils, to enable quicker turnaround in updating planning schemes with outputs from completed flood studies. Flood study amendments that progress using the Committee process will be decided using the Minister for Planning's powers of intervention under the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>.</p> <p>These initiatives are available to councils that request to use them.</p> <p>As the intent of the recommendation relates to a statewide approach and the current program is regionally-focused there is 'Support in Principle' for this recommendation.</p>	
<p>18. That the Victorian Government introduce amendments to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic) and Victoria Planning Provisions so that planning and other authorities must address climate change at all levels of the planning process.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> amended by the <i>Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Act 2024</i> (Climate Change Amendment Act) makes two significant changes to support greater consideration of climate change in the planning system. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new overall objective that provides for consideration of climate policies and obligations for all decisions about the use and development of land at all levels of planning. This is in addition to 	<p>DTP</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>the existing climate change purpose in the Victoria Planning Provisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new requirement for planning authorities to consider climate change when preparing a planning scheme or planning scheme amendment. <p>The requirement enables the Minister for Planning to issue Ministerial Directions to set out the scope and what must be considered under the new requirement. DTP and DEECA are currently developing the Ministerial Directions and guidance to support planning authorities meeting the new requirement.</p> <p>Additionally, work is underway to progress implementation of the <i>Environmentally sustainable development of buildings and subdivisions: A roadmap for Victoria's planning system</i> to improve the sustainability of building and subdivision developments across Victoria.</p>	
<p>19. That the Victorian Government work with floodplain management authorities and climate scientists to understand how flood modelling can be used to better predict the impact of climate change on flooding and update its flood management policies in line with this understanding.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The Victorian Government will continue to work with floodplain management authorities and climate scientists to understand how to use climate projections in flood modelling to better predict and understand the impacts from flooding.</p> <p>The review and refresh of the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (VFMS) will continue to rely on the best science currently available.</p> <p>The Australian Rainfall and Runoff (ARR) guidelines outlines an approach for subject matter experts to manage the risks of increasingly intense rainfall and flooding across building and infrastructure projects and informs design decisions to allow for flooding events.</p> <p>Newly developed flood studies for urban and regional areas are and will continue to be informed, as soon as practical, by the best available data and the most recent edition of ARR.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>20. That regional local councils work closely with their regional catchment management authorities to better understand, manage, and mitigate the risk of building on floodplains in regional Victoria.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Regional councils and Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) have established working relationships to deliver respective regulatory responsibilities at a local and regional level, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • councils in leading flood studies and decision making under the planning scheme that sets the direction for the use and development of all relevant land impacted by flooding, with technical advice and input by floodplain management authorities • CMAs, in their responsibilities for leading the development and coordination of regional floodplain management strategies outlining agreed priority actions for flood mitigation. These priorities are agreed in partnership with local councils, VICSES, water corporations, other partner agencies and local communities. <p>Integrated planning at the regional level prevents inappropriate new development in flood prone areas. Regional councils continue to support these efforts by continuing to work with regional CMAs to fully understand and articulate flood risk and align strategic action and directions in mitigating flood risk.</p> <p>The Victorian Government’s current \$22.2 million program to complete flood studies, fast track outputs from flood studies into planning schemes and scoping of future flood mitigation activities further supports regional councils to work closely with their catchment management authority to understand and mitigate flood risk.</p>	<p>DTP</p>
<p>21. That Victoria’s strategic land use planning limit inappropriate new housing and business developments inside 1% AEP floodplains.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>It is State planning policy (strategy) to avoid locating inappropriate use and development in the floodplain. Work is underway to develop a new plan for Victoria, the State’s key strategic planning document, setting the direction for Victoria’s development through to 2050. Stakeholders have raised natural hazards, including flood, as a key</p>	<p>DTP</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		consideration of the plan. The plan is scheduled to be released in the first quarter of 2025.	
<p>22. That the Victorian Government support residents within 1% AEP floodplains, including with funded programs, to manage the risk facing their existing properties and make their properties more flood resilient.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government will continue to support Victorians living within the 1% AEP.</p> <p>New development within the 1% AEP is assessed against the flood requirements of the planning scheme and Building Regulations, which assess the appropriateness of development, including new homes, and which for planning applies particular mitigation measures to address risk at the strategic and statutory level.</p> <p>Regional floodplain management strategies and flood studies will continue to outline for communities impacted by flood agreed priority actions for mitigation in consultation with local councils, community and government authorities.</p> <p>Any detailed flood study for a flood prone community is expected to assess the scale of potential flood damages for both developed areas and areas being considered for future development. Where a community, through its regional floodplain management strategy process supports use of flood mitigation infrastructure to facilitate development government can invest with the community if the proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is clearly supported by the community. • is viable – costs don't outweigh benefits • and the benefiting community has agreed to be accountable for ongoing management and maintenance arrangements. <p>Following the flood event the Victorian Government's approach to supporting flood-impacted Victorians that were displaced from their homes ensured they had access to programs and services to provide immediate and longer-term housing options. This included immediate</p>	<p>DTP</p>



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		<p>hardship financial assistance, access to emergency accommodation, along with housing hazard assessments and make-safe works to make their homes safe to live in while they await permanent repairs.</p>	
<p>23. That the Victorian Government fund a resilient homes program to raise or retrofit residential properties at risk of flood inundation, and which prioritises homeowners affected by the 2022 flood event.</p>	<p>Not support</p>	<p>The Victorian Government continues to support homeowners affected by the 2022 floods through the Connecting Community to Builders program.</p> <p>However, the Victorian Government also recognises that addressing legacy flood risk for residential properties across Victoria in a changing climate is a complex and challenging issue. As outlined in the Victorian Government’s <i>Built Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan (BEAAP) 2022-2026</i>, it will require a mix of site and township scale planning responses in conjunction with reduction strategies from across the emergency management sector.</p> <p>Incentivising landowners to raise or retrofit existing houses at risk of flood would present several practical and policy complexities. Challenges include complexities around the thresholds and criteria for establishing the scope and reach of such a program, along with uncertainty about its long-term effectiveness and sustainability as climate change continues to drive more frequent, severe and concurrent emergency events of various types in Victoria. Addressing these challenges, along with practical and market capacity considerations, would require significant investment of time and resources. The potential quantum of this investment therefore requires careful consideration of its mitigation benefits. The Victorian Government will continue to assess the benefits of a resilient homes program for future emergencies.</p> <p>At this time the Victorian Government is directing its resources to supporting homeowners affected by the 2022 flood event through recovery services outlined in Chapter 8 of this response.</p>	<p>DTP</p>



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		<p>The Victorian Government is also focused on easing the housing pressure faced by Victoria through the <i>Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024-2034</i>. Delivering the needed housing supply must occur in safe locations and respond appropriately to natural hazards, including flood. This applies to regional areas and in key activity centres.</p> <p>A new plan for Victoria that sets out what our state will look like over the coming decades is a key part of delivering on this commitment.</p> <p>Regional floodplain management strategies and flood studies will continue to outline for communities impacted by flood, agreed priority actions for mitigation in consultation with local councils, community and government authorities. For the Victorian Government to support investment, public benefit must be demonstrated.</p>	
<p>24. That the Victorian Government require planning authorities, floodplain management authorities and other relevant actors to take account of the change in land use and especially projected changes to land use when setting flood levels for planning and development and the application of the land subject to inundation overlay.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Flood studies are a critical resource in understanding flood hazard at a point in time. The flood models developed as part of a flood study are the tool for predicting future changes in flood hazard and behaviour, including the cumulative impacts of land use and development and land use change. Flood studies are also needed to understand potential risk treatment options, such as applying the appropriate flood zone or overlay control in planning schemes and setting floor levels.</p> <p>As authorities with floodplain management function under the <i>Water Act 1989</i>, Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) have the technical skills and expertise to assess the development application in terms of flood risk and to understand the long term implications to the property, adjoining properties and the catchment generally.</p> <p>CMAs and planning authorities are required to work together to introduce or update flood controls in planning schemes. Using their specialist technical flood knowledge and guided by the available flood mapping from flood studies (where available), CMAs are, in most</p>	<p>DTP</p>



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		<p>instances, able to provide advice on managing risk by recommending conditions on a planning permit to the responsible authority (generally a council).</p> <p>CMAAs and councils are required to specify minimum floor levels for proposed development, based on best available flood data and information, including under the planning scheme which contains the strategic planning directions for the municipality and region. As noted above, flood studies are the recognised process to understand flood risk and investigate potential mitigation. Ensuring areas earmarked for intensive development and growth are informed by early consideration of flood risk is critical.</p> <p>State planning policy and strategy addresses this from a land use planning perspective. Responsible authorities make decisions under their planning schemes which set out the vision for future use and development in a municipality and establish strategic directions about how a municipality is expected to change through the implementation of planning policy and the planning scheme. A planning authority must take into account the Municipal Planning Strategy when it prepares an amendment to the planning scheme and give effect to the Strategy when it makes a decision under the planning scheme, including when applying flood controls.</p> <p>The new plan for Victoria, currently under development, is exploring ways to guide planning and relevant authorities in managing the state’s environmental constraints, and where and how development is planned in relation to flood risk.</p>	
Flood mitigation infrastructure			
<p>25. As part of the development of the new Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy, that the Victorian Government review the</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy 2016 (VFMS) was developed over four years, building on extensive consultation with stakeholders and the broader community following major flooding across Victoria in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The VFMS’s 56 actions have</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



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<p>operation of the last Strategy, in consultation with local councils, community representatives, expert advisory groups and other relevant stakeholders</p>		<p>been tracked, and three biennial implementation reports have been published. An independent audit in 2020 determined that DEECA had established clear governance structures to engage delivery partners in the strategy's implementation.</p> <p>After Action Reviews (AARs) coordinated in 2023 by DEECA after the 2022 floods show a high level of agency acceptance of policy relating to key issues – as well as support for reassessment of several aspects.</p> <p>A review and refresh of the VFMS, due to commence in 2025, will be completed in consultation with relevant stakeholders.</p>	
<p>26. That the Victorian Government's review of the last Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (and development of the new Strategy) examine levee funding and management arrangements to determine if they are still fit for purpose based on new information and insights from the October 2022 flood event</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Following the flood event, the Victorian Government funded the four northern Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) to coordinate an assessment of the management arrangements for levees. The assessment, led by CMAs, commenced in 2024 and is working with councils, VICSES and communities to identify where levees require changes to existing management arrangements. The results of these assessments are due in 2025. They will help to inform both the new strategy and if the existing levee management and funding arrangements are fit for purpose.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>
<p>27. That the Victorian Government fund floodplain managers to develop maps modelling scenarios demonstrating the impact on landholders of specified levee breaches</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Flood studies are the appropriate mechanism to assess the potential impact of a levee breach. A flood model can test and map where water would flow if a levee breach occurred and the possible impacts of that flow on assets, however a levee breach may still occur in an unmodelled area..</p> <p>Historical levee breaches are modelled during the flood model calibration processes. Based on the learnings from this analysis and potentially other inputs, levee breaches are tested for future (or design) flood events. Modelling of levee breach scenarios is then stored in FloodZoom for use during flood events.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		The existing Victorian Government investment in flood risk assessments and priority actions to reduce those risks is guided by regional floodplain management strategy priorities, with analysis extending to the impacts of levee breaches. Assessments covering rural settings are eligible to be considered for future studies.	
28. That the Victorian Government review the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy to examine issues around rural levee management. This should include the roles and responsibilities of local councils and private landowners and consider the adequacy of taxpayer support for maintaining these systems.	Support in principle	<p>Clarifying roles and responsibilities around levee management remains a key priority. A review and refresh of the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy will be completed in consultation with relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>The outcomes of the levee assessment project (<i>see recommendation 37</i>), due in 2025, will include data supporting the categorisation of which levees are strategically important. This information will help to inform the refresh of the strategy and if the existing policies and accountabilities for flood mitigation infrastructure are fit for purpose.</p>	DEECA
29. That the Victorian Government fund the pilot of a ring levee development program in Northern Victoria to protect house and curtilage in flood-prone areas	Support in part	<p>The Victorian Government recognises the benefit of ring levees as an effective tool for protecting assets in some flood-prone areas. The Victorian Government supports the construction of ring levees to provide flood mitigation benefits for private assets (house and curtilage). Therefore, DEECA will prepare guidelines to facilitate the private construction of pilot ring levees to aid landowners.</p> <p>The Victorian Government does not support public investment in private assets for flood mitigation. The Victorian Government supports investment in the construction of levees that demonstrate public benefit. The Victorian Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to access funds for flood mitigation infrastructure.</p>	DEECA
30. That the Victorian Government ensure that future flood mitigation efforts include updated and rigorous	Support in full	The Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy 2016 sets out the criteria that guide government investment in new flood mitigation	DEECA



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>hydraulic modelling before implementation, ensuring the effectiveness of compensatory measures. Additionally, these strategies should undergo independent peer review to validate their expected performance</p>		<p>infrastructure. This includes supporting analysis of how effective the infrastructure is expected to be in meeting the criteria.</p> <p>The Victorian Government committed \$4.7 million in 2024 to prepare regional councils for seeking future Victorian and Commonwealth government investment for priority flood mitigation infrastructure. Councils will be funded to progress regional floodplain management strategy priority flood mitigation works to shovel-ready status, including working with local communities to scope and develop a business case for funding construction.</p> <p>To be considered, a business case for construction will need to provide supported evidence of rigorous flood modelling, proposed benefits of the infrastructure, and effectiveness in reducing risk. The supported evidence should include a review undertaken by a qualified person.</p> <p>Within metropolitan Melbourne, Melbourne Water uses the most up-to-date modelling in its assessment of proposed works in floodplains including potential mitigation measures. This includes peer review. All models will be updated by 2026. Melbourne Water’s current investigation into potential mitigation measures in the Maribyrnong catchment includes the updated Maribyrnong flood model.</p>	
<p>31. That the Victorian Government ensure that major flood mitigation measures be assessed and reviewed to ensure they perform as intended.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Flood mitigation measures are assessed before approval and construction to ensure that they do not create unintended consequences and perform as intended.</p> <p>The Victorian Government acknowledges that decisions on whether to invest in priority flood projects and when, are best managed at the regional level with funding coordinated at a state level. Regional floodplain management strategies will continue to guide government investment in flood planning. Flood studies and mitigation measures should include a review undertaken by a qualified person.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>Flood studies are a snapshot at the point in time when they were created, and changes in the landscape can trigger a review. A review of the relevant flood model is designed to confirm the performance of the mitigation infrastructure and to update associated flood maps and other flood intelligence products.</p>	
<p>32. That the efficacy and impact of the Flemington Racecourse flood wall be considered as part of Melbourne Water’s review of mitigation in the Maribyrnong River catchment announced following the updated flood modelling.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>Melbourne Water has completed flood modelling for the Maribyrnong River, enabling the impact of structures along the river to be evaluated, including Flemington Racecourse. The Independent Review Panel’s final assessment of the Flemington Racecourse wall found it contributed to an increase in flood extent across the catchment of 1 per cent and that the mitigation works put in place to offset the impact of the wall didn’t perform as well as expected.</p> <p>Melbourne Water is now incorporating an examination of the flood wall mitigation into its broader investigation of potential mitigation options across the catchment. The mitigation study has progressed through a comprehensive procurement process which is now complete, and a consultant has been appointed.</p> <p>The study will identify the most feasible solutions for riverine flood hazards. These must prioritise the safety and resilience of the catchment’s communities and have the greatest impact on reducing the flood risk – both current and predicted to the year 2100.</p> <p>The community and stakeholders will be invited to participate in the development and assessment of options.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>
<p>33. That the Victorian Government further investigate options for increasing outlet capacity at Lake Eppalock. This investigation should involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting a cost-benefit analysis to evaluate financial feasibility 	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Following the flood event, the Victorian Government undertook a technical assessment of Lake Eppalock to determine if changing the operating and infrastructure arrangements could improve protection for downstream communities from future flooding and some of the associated financial and non-financial implications of such changes. The final report was published on DEECA’s website in November</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive stakeholder engagement to gather input from affected parties and communities • examination of environmental effects • environmental risk assessments to understand potential impacts on local ecosystems, wildlife and water quality • reviewing water-sharing arrangements to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – appropriate adjustments to maintain equitable water distribution and – compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. 		<p>2023 and public consultation on the assessment report was open for eight weeks from February to April 2024.</p> <p>The Lake Eppalock Technical Assessment Report and public consultation feedback has been provided to Campaspe Shire Council for consideration, as they lead the review of the Rochester Flood Management Plan. Campaspe Shire Council with technical support from North Central Catchment Management Authority, will include the benchmarking of all flood mitigation options for Rochester such as levees, housing raising or changes to the operations/infrastructure at Lake Eppalock.</p> <p>Pending the outcome of this benchmarking, a business case for implementation and construction will be required to provide supported evidence of rigorous flood modelling, environmental impacts, mechanisms for offsetting any water entitlement impacts, and the proposed benefits of the changes and effectiveness in reducing flood risk compared with the cost.</p> <p>The review of the Rochester Flood Management Plan is underway with funds provided from the Victorian Government to the council delivering the project, and will include significant community and stakeholder engagement, including a robust governance and management framework and a community reference group. The review is expected to take 18 months to complete. For options that include changes to Lake Eppalock’s operating arrangements, further consideration will be given to the ongoing socio-economic impact and the water security risks to Bendigo and surrounds.</p>	
<p>34. That the Victorian Government ensure that, for future events that are expected to replicate high storage and high rainfall conditions, new temporary operating rules for water storage and release are</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government supports storage managers doing what they can to mitigate flood impacts during high storage and high rainfall conditions, while ensuring appropriate protections are in place for existing entitlement holders.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>developed. These new rules must take account of the interest of those who are affected by Eildon and Eppalock’s storages including downstream landholders and water entitlement holders.</p>		<p>New temporary operating rules have been shown to be ineffective with existing weather forecast accuracies at both lakes and infrastructure constraints at Lake Eppalock.</p> <p>The Victorian Government recently completed independent technical assessments that explored potential changes to storage operations at Lake Eildon and Lake Eppalock, including new temporary operating rules for water storages during high storage and high rainfall conditions.</p> <p>These studies illustrated the limitations of such approaches, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limitations of storage outlet infrastructure at Lake Eppalock; • limitations in the weather forecast accuracy required to confidently make short-term releases to create airspace in the lead-up to a storm; and • limitations in the reliability of long-range climate signals required to make seasonal changes to target storage levels. <p>Given current levels of forecast accuracy, such approaches are ineffective flood mitigation measures and may risk inadvertently exacerbating downstream flooding.</p> <p>Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) is the storage manager for Lake Eppalock and Lake Eildon. They continuously monitor catchment conditions, storage levels and inflows, downstream tributary flows, expected demands, rain forecasts for the storages’ catchments as well as the downstream tributaries’ catchment and climate outlooks.</p> <p>GMW then uses this information to manage lake levels and make releases to provide flood mitigation, meet customer demands and comply with storage manager obligations, which includes providing flood mitigation where possible.</p> <p>For Lake Eildon, GMW actively and adaptively manages the storage level and uses target filling curves to adapt the amount of flood</p>	



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>mitigation provided based on seasonal conditions. The target filling curves are designed to manage the rate that Lake Eildon fills to provide downstream flood mitigation, while protecting the reliability of supply for entitlement holders. GMW uses current season data and historical data from years when the catchment was at a similar wetness to determine the target filling curve for each month from May to October. The target curve is extended to November in wet years.</p> <p>GMW manages the storage level in line with this filling curve and where possible (without increasing downstream flooding impacts) makes pre-releases of water if the storage is above the target filling curve.</p> <p>GMW will continue to investigate opportunities to provide additional seasonal flood mitigation based on best practice and the latest scientific evidence. If new tools emerge or modelling and forecasting accuracy improves GMW will work with DEECA to make changes to the existing rules, recognising that any changes would take account the interests of those who are affected by Eildon and Eppalock operations including entitlement holders and downstream landholders and communities.</p>	
<p>35. That the Victorian Government ensure that the state’s existing culvert infrastructure in high-risk flood areas is fit for purpose, and that the Government also consult with local councils and other relevant stakeholders and prioritise betterment in any upgrade works deemed necessary.</p>	<p>Under review</p>	<p>Victoria’s existing culvert infrastructure is managed by the Victorian Government, councils and other agencies/landowners. The Victorian Government is responsible for culvert infrastructure across the 23,000kms of arterial road network. Councils manage culvert infrastructure and drainage networks on the local road network, while there are various arrangements in place regarding the responsibility for the management of culvert infrastructure and drainage networks on public land.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has undertaken 451 drainage activities across 83 kilometres of the arterial road network, including clearing blockages, drainage, culvert repairs and replacement since the 2022 floods.</p>	<p>DTP</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>DTP's recent engagement with councils as part of the 10-year maintenance strategy has similarly identified that culverts are a key priority for councils.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will work across DTP, DEECA, CMAs and other agencies, to determine what interventions are going to provide the best value and ensure any intervention does not have negative impacts.</p> <p>Restoration and optimisation of drainage networks to original design capacity through rehabilitation, as well as betterment and upgrades of assets are subject to standard budgetary processes.</p>	
36. That the Victorian Government audit transport links in and out of disaster-prone areas	Support in part	<p>Managing critical transport links forms part of the Victorian Government's current approach to emergency management planning, response, and recovery.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will work with DTP, as the lead agency, with support from DGS to identify, and audit key access routes including road and rail infrastructure and evaluate resilience for future emergencies and disaster events. This will be limited to the arterial road network and local road network where there are no available arterial road links.</p> <p>It is anticipated this work will be completed by 2028. This work will likely need to be phased into multiple stages as the implementation actions for other recommendations are delivered and may require funding.</p>	DTP
37. That the Victorian Government clarify responsibility for flood mitigation infrastructure, with clear accountability and transparency for who is responsible for each asset	Support in part	<p>Following the flood event, the Victorian Government funded the four northern Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) to coordinate an assessment of the management arrangements for levees. The assessment, led by CMAs, commenced in 2024 and is working with councils, VICSES and communities to identify where levees require changes to existing management arrangements. The results of these assessments are due in 2025 and will help to inform both the new</p>	DEECA



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		strategy and the suitability of existing levee management and funding arrangements.	
<p>38. That the Victorian Government work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements are not unduly burdensome.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Department of Justice and Community Safety (Emergency Recovery Victoria) is establishing a dedicated strategic review into how Victoria can enhance how it applies the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). A dedicated team will work across departments, councils and agencies with disaster recovery accountabilities to identify and implement DRFA improvements. This team will review Victorian DRFA processes to streamline these where possible, including reviewing documentation, supporting capability uplift across the sector, and working with the Commonwealth on its DRFA reforms. The DRFA Strategic Review will be conducted over two years with improvement opportunities delivered during this time to provide immediate and longer-term solutions by June 2026.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Community Safety (Emergency Recovery Victoria) also contributed to the review undertaken by the National Emergency Management Agency’s (NEMA) on Recovery Funding Arrangements. Input provided was based on insights gained through application of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements within Victoria.</p> <p>In addition, the Commonwealth is preparing its responses to various internal and external reviews of the DRFA and disaster recovery funding, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the DRFA Review; • the Independent Review of National Natural Disaster Governance Arrangements; and • and the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (the Colvin Review). 	<p>ERV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		The Commonwealth's responses to the various reviews and recommendations will inform delivery timeframes, which still need to be confirmed.	
39. That the Victorian Government prioritise investment in betterment projects to improve the resilience of mitigation infrastructure, and in doing so work with the Commonwealth Government to achieve this goal.	Support in principle	The Commonwealth Government is currently reviewing its administration of disaster funding. Any reforms are expected to occur in the medium to longer-term. Victoria continues to advocate for short-term reforms related to the level of evidentiary requirements, the administrative burden in the audit and assurance arrangements and for expanded betterment opportunities. Victoria has also contributed to the Commonwealth's Infrastructure Betterment Program guidelines which seek to ensure rebuilt infrastructure delivers essential services to the community in a way that minimises future damage.	ERV
40. That the Victorian Government adapt policies and funding models to prioritise betterment initiatives, including ensuring that financial resources are allocated effectively to meet long-term needs of at-risk communities, and in doing so work with the Commonwealth Government to achieve this goal	Support in principle	Investments in betterment projects are considered by the Victorian Government alongside other recovery programs necessary for addressing all recovery needs identified after an event, and investment is determined based on the cumulative demand for government support. The Victorian Government also seeks investment in improved and resilience-building supports through the Commonwealth's Disaster Ready Fund which seeks to increase the resilience, adaptability, and preparedness of governments, community groups, and affected communities to reduce impact of natural hazards and disasters.	ERV
Flood emergency warnings			
41. The transfer of ownership and responsibility for public gauges to the Bureau of Meteorology should be completed as a priority, and the Victorian Government should request the Commonwealth	Support in part	The Victorian Government supports the transfer of partial responsibility of high priority flood warning gauges to the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM). The Victorian Government does not support gauges unrelated to flood warning or managed by water corporations for their own	DEECA



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>Government provide a public update by the end of 2024 on these transfer timelines</p>		<p>purposes being transferred to the BoM, given the other uses of monitoring data from these sites.</p> <p>River and rainfall monitoring gauges in Victoria are installed and maintained by multiple organisations for different purposes, some of which include supporting flood warning systems. The ownership and responsibility for these gauges is shared between over 55 participating organisations in the Regional Water Monitoring Partnership (RWMP). DEECA has a close working relationship with the BoM through the RWMP and formally signed a Letter of Agreement in July 2024 to participate in the Commonwealth Government’s \$236 million Flood Warning Infrastructure Network (FWIN) remediation investment announced as part of the 2023/24 Commonwealth Budget.</p> <p>FWIN aims to deliver a national solution to flood warning infrastructure arrangements in order to improve flood data consistency and support reliable, timely and accurate flood information to communities. Implementation of FWIN is conditional on Victoria 50:50 cost-sharing gauge maintenance with the Commonwealth in priority catchments, which Victoria has already agreed to. The current scope of the BoM’s FWIN program is to include transfer and partial responsibility for nominated high priority flood warning sites in high priority catchments through the existing RWMP framework from 2027-28 (noting the 50:50 cost share). This program will not include all “public gauges” as noted in the recommendation. Remaining flood warning gauges will continue under current arrangements through the RWMP. DEECA are regularly meeting with the FWIN implementation team and will work with the BoM to provide a public update on the transfer timelines in line with this recommendation.</p>	



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>42. That the Victorian Government identify and fill critical gaps in the state’s gauge network. New gauges should be installed in priority locations as soon as possible, and existing gauges should be upgraded with telemetry services. Information from flood gauges and telemetry services should be easily accessible by the public.</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy (VFMS) and regional strategies provide a robust framework for identifying and filling critical gaps in the state’s gauge network.</p> <p>Since the launch of the VFMS in 2016, the Victorian Government has invested \$1.45 million into Victoria’s river and rainfall monitoring gauge networks that support flood warning systems, including the installation of new gauges where gaps have been identified, and upgrading telemetry services to bolster community and the Bureau of Meteorology’s (BoM) access to reliable data in real time. DEECA worked with councils to identify flood warning gauges with limited or no telemetry service and added either radio or satellite-based telemetry, based on technical support and recommendations from the BoM.</p> <p>Future investment in upgrading or installing new gauges will be informed by local flood studies and regional floodplain management strategies.</p> <p>DEECA also maintains a pool of compact portable river monitoring gauges, that can be quickly installed on an as-needs basis to monitor changes in river heights in real-time. These portable gauges are designed and used to temporarily back up the permanent network of gauges during floods.</p> <p>The VFMS outlines that the upfront capital costs to install gauges outside the Melbourne Water region, are shared between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. On-going asset ownership maintenance is the responsibility of the agency requesting the new gauge as the beneficiary of the data.</p> <p>In the case of the metropolitan Melbourne catchments, Melbourne Water’s current expansion project, developed post October 2022, consists of the installation of 18 additional gauges by upgrading 6 existing sites with additional parameters and the creation of 12 additional sites with each site being equipped with telemetry.</p>	<p>DEECA</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>Melbourne Water consistently review and expand the network to address gaps.</p> <p>The BoM website continues to be the principal source of publicly accessible gauge data.</p>	
<p>43. That the Victorian Government use the experience of warnings transmitted during the 2022 flood event to identify and adopt best practice for community warning frequency</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government is committed to best practice warnings delivery. The Service Level Specification for Flood Forecasting and Warning Services for Victoria sets out the level of service for warnings issued by the BoM. VicEmergency warnings are produced after the issue of a BoM warning.</p> <p>During the flood event, VICSES responded to feedback from communities regarding the high frequency of updates for flood warnings with little changes. VICSES responded by working with the BoM to reduce the frequency of warning updates for some locations where minor flooding was prolonged with little to no change in forecast.</p> <p>Victoria is an active member of the National Council for fire and emergency services (AFAC) Public Information and Warning Group, where member jurisdictions share best practices and findings. This group engages with National Hazards Research Australia researchers, to ensure research is used within Victorian frameworks.</p>	<p>EMV</p>
<p>44. That the Victorian Government improve the accuracy, timeliness, and relevance of the VicEmergency service during an emergency. In doing so, the Government should actively seek input from non-government and government stakeholders to ensure that the service can meet the diverse needs</p>	<p>Support in full</p>	<p>The Victorian Government will continue to pursue opportunities for enhancing the accuracy, timeliness and relevance of warnings delivered through the VicEmergency platform through a range of initiatives.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will invest \$53 million in a modernised VicEmergency app and the central database for our emergency services, EM-COP. This will also make sure the app can be translated into different languages.</p>	<p>EMV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>of different communities during a crisis.</p>		<p>VICSES was allocated funding in August 2024 via the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) for its 'Consequence-Based, Intelligence-Driven Warnings' initiative.</p> <p>VICSES will work with partners to enable more timely, tailored and relevant warnings during flood and storm emergencies, providing information to people to take action and stay safe. Flood warning areas will be based on likely consequences with information in warnings tailored to local impacts through predefined and documented intelligence. Storm warnings issued through VicEmergency will be via data feed from the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) providing more timely, consistent and relevant information to communities.</p> <p>EMV will also work with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to harness the capability of the national messaging system to increase the resilience and timeliness of Victoria's information and warning dissemination systems from 2025-26.</p>	
<p>45. That the Victorian Government improve the flood warning system so that warnings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accurate with the most up-to-date information • delivered in a timely way • clear and easily understood • consistently disseminated across different communities • accessible in relevant formats and languages, where appropriate 	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Flood warnings are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they are based on current research and technology, providing accurate and timely information to community.</p> <p>VICSES will work with partners to enable more timely, tailored and relevant warnings during flood and storm emergencies, providing information to people to take action and stay safe. Flood warning areas will be based on likely consequences with information in warnings tailored to local impacts through predefined and documented intelligence. Storm warnings issued through VicEmergency will be via data feed from the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) providing more timely, consistent and relevant information to communities</p> <p>The Victorian Government will continue reviewing options for enhancing VicEmergency through standard budgetary processes. EMV is also working with the National Emergency Management</p>	<p>VICSES</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		Agency (NEMA) to harness the capability of the national messaging system to increase resilience and timeliness across information and warning dissemination systems.	
<p>46. That the Victorian Government ensure the emergency warning system is inclusive and able to be used by all Victorians, and should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include real-time translation of warnings into multiple languages during a crisis event • deliver information in easier to understand ways which meet the needs of people with a disability. 	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of providing the community with accurate, timely and accessible warnings and information.</p> <p>In 2024, Victoria finalised a pilot project that developed real-time translation of community warnings for the VicEmergency app along with some enhancements to accessibility. The project was a proof of concept to translate to Arabic and Simplified Chinese, and the pilot was considered a success.</p> <p>In December 2024, the Victorian Government announced that it will invest \$53 million in a modernised VicEmergency app and the central database for emergency services, EM-COP. This will also make sure the app can be translated into different languages.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will also continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to explore resilience funding avenues, such as the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) to support further work.</p>	EMV
<p>47. Given the essential role of digital connectivity in emergency management and response, that the Victorian Government, working with the Commonwealth Government as necessary, address connectivity limitations, focusing on rural and remote areas. Potential options to consider are the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhanced infrastructure investment • geographically based coverage 	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government is currently working with the Commonwealth Government to addresses digital connectivity gaps and ensure telecommunication infrastructure can provide resilient and reliable communications during emergencies.</p> <p>These efforts include work to deliver Public Safety Mobile Broadband (PSMB) in collaboration with the Commonwealth Government. PSMB aims to modernise Australia’s critical communications capabilities by providing critical mobile broadband services. It will also enhance the operational effectiveness of public safety agencies and their personnel to enable them to meet the growing expectations of the community, saving lives and property and improving user safety. It is anticipated that PSMB will be delivered by the end of 2026.</p>	EMV



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rapid deployment of temporary satellite vans. 		<p>The Victorian Government has also partnered with the Commonwealth Government and industry to deliver 243 new mobile base stations across the state as part of mobile black spot funding rounds, invested in 211 projects to improve the resilience of mobile towers, co-funded 27 new base stations in peri-urban areas at risk of disaster and supported the rollout of 343 community satellite/Wi-Fi facilities located at emergency relief/recovery centres across regional Victoria. These efforts are supported by the Victorian Government’s Connecting Victoria program, which is funding the delivery of new and upgraded telecommunications services through 1,400 broadband and mobile projects across the state, including over 950 projects in regional Victoria. These projects are currently targeting completion by June 2026, but are subject third-party site agreements and planning approvals which can extend timeframes for some projects</p> <p>The Victorian Government will continue to advocate for national telecommunication policy reform to further address connectivity limitations. The advocacy efforts of the Victorian Government are reflected in Victoria’s submission to the Commonwealth Government’s 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review (RTR) – available from the Department of Government Services (DGS) on request.</p>	
<p>48. That the Victorian Government establish long-term community awareness initiatives to ensure the public understand flood risk and actions. Successful bushfire awareness campaigns could be used as a basis for such initiatives.</p>	<p>Under review</p>	<p>The Victorian Government recognises the contribution long-term community awareness campaigns make in increasing the community’s understanding of natural hazards and protective actions.</p> <p>In 2025 the Victorian Government will launch a public awareness campaign encouraging the uptake of appropriate insurance for Victorian homeowners. This campaign will be delivered through a partnership model with councils and key emergency management agencies, using existing relationships to ensure communities receive</p>	<p>VICSES</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>tailored resources. Communication material will be developed in collaboration with councils, and customised to meet local needs.</p> <p>In early 2024, two brand new public awareness campaigns were launched on the VICSES website and on its social media platforms. The campaigns address floods (‘If you don’t know, don’t go’) and storms (Are you storm ready?) and provide advice on how to stay safe during these natural hazards. Further investment would facilitate the ongoing and sustained building of community flood awareness and enable timely activation of campaigns in times of high risk. This investment would be subject to standard budgetary processes.</p> <p>VICSES also undertakes on average around 1,200 local community engagement initiatives each year with around 30 per cent of those primarily focussed on emergency weather preparedness for floods and storms across Victoria.</p> <p>In addition to these initiatives, VICSES has received funding from the Commonwealth through Round Two of the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) for a Flood and Storm Education Project which will develop age-appropriate session plans and guidance material on flood and storm risk safety for students.</p>	
Resourcing and response of the Victoria State Emergency Service			
<p>49. That the Victorian Government increase funding for training of volunteers to boost the capacity of State Emergency Service units and Shepparton and Echuca and Moama Search and Rescue squads to respond during emergencies.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government has continued to invest in VICSES with the 2024-25 State Budget, including an allocation of almost \$7 million for VICSES to support their volunteer base through volunteer training, Incident Management Team training and a volunteer support program. This includes extending contracts with additional staff trainers to support volunteer training programs over the next 12 months.</p> <p>As part of a major funding package announced in December 2024, the Victorian Government will invest almost \$30 million to deliver</p>	<p>EMV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>training and support programs to help upskill and train more volunteers.</p> <p>The Victorian Government commits to continuing to work with the VICSES, Shepparton and Echuca Moama Search and Rescue Squads to understand the requirements for bolstering training opportunities for volunteers in a range of specialist response skills, noting that these options may be subject to standard budgetary processes.</p>	
<p>50. To improve the management and distribution of sandbags during a flood event, that the Victorian Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that there is sufficient supply quantity of sandbags available for preparation for floods in a wet year. • assess the benefits of a coordinated sandbag management system in Victoria. This system could include capacity for scalable sandbagging stations and address resource gaps in high-risk flood areas. • ensure that emergency management plans are regularly updated to reflect current resource and logistical capabilities. • explore options for supplementing reliance on sandbags with innovative new products such as floodgates or water inflated barriers. 	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Sandbags are an important resource during flood events with their deployment, when used with other measures, reduce the amount of water entering homes or businesses as well as assisting with the development of temporary levees.</p> <p>The flood event resulted in an unprecedented demand for sandbag deployment. VICSES deployed its full stock of available sandbags and worked with local providers to secure material and increase capacity at short notice. This culminated in VICSES deploying an estimated 1.5 million sandbags to impacted areas.</p> <p>As of July 2024, VICSES has increased its stock of available sandbags to 1.481 million in preparation for high-risk weather periods and continues to evaluate its distribution arrangements to ensure they can be deployed in a timely manner. To that end, VICSES has increased sandbag storage locations with strategic stakeholders, most notably municipalities in high-risk areas.</p> <p>VICSES will also work with councils to explore alternative options to supplement the reliance on sandbags via their role in flood mitigation. Funding support for alternatives may be available from the State and Commonwealth Grants Scheme. VICSES will work with councils to include relevant mobilisation and demobilisation arrangements in Municipal Flood Emergency Plans.</p>	<p>VICSES</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>51. That the Victorian Government develop a strategic rescue plan in areas at high risk of flooding, so that they have appropriate resources and expertise for rescues during a crisis event. This plan should include consideration of procurement, expansion of reserve caches and processes for rapid deployment of resources.</p>	<p>Under review</p>	<p>The Victorian Government recognises that flood rescue planning for areas at high risk of flooding is a key element of Emergency Management Planning at the Municipal tier and would deliver a range of benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that appropriate resources, such as rescue equipment and personnel, are readily available, reducing response times during flood events; and focusing procurement activities and expanding reserve caches to align resources with the local likelihood of operational flood rescues. <p>However, analysis is required with the Control Agency for water rescue (Victoria Police), VICSES and municipalities identified with high flood risk to determine the level of existing risk, existing capabilities across agencies and any further responses planning and capability development that may be necessary to achieve the benefits outlined above.. The undertaking of this analysis and any changes to levels of response capability would require additional investment and be subject to standard budgetary processes.</p>	<p>VICSES</p>
<p>52. That the Victorian Government, in collaboration with the Victoria State Emergency Service, review its approach to evacuation warnings to identify opportunities for improvement and increased community responsiveness</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>VICSES continually considers refinements to warning content and dissemination, including evacuation messaging. As noted in Recommendation 45, enhancements are planned for increased timeliness and local relevance, including evacuation warnings.</p> <p>Victoria has adopted the new Australian Warning System, providing a consistent set of action statements to give the community clearer advice and consistent terminology relating to evacuation, agreed to by agencies across the country.</p> <p>Ongoing research contributes to continual refinements of warnings to address the needs of diverse communities.</p>	<p>VICSES</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>53. That the Victorian Government and the Victoria State Emergency Service work with:</p> <p>a. New South Wales to finalise the MOU that has been initiated, and to make it publicly available</p> <p>b. South Australian counterparts to initiate and establish a MOU or other mechanisms for cross-border cooperation in relation to shared emergency events, and to make this publicly available.</p>	<p>Support in part</p>	<p>The VICSES worked in close collaboration with its New South Wales and South Australian counterparts during the flood event.</p> <p>VICSES has collaborated with New South Wales State Emergency Services (NSW SES) to update the organisations' memorandum of understanding (MoU). The updated MoU will address local, regional and state arrangements for the response and the deployment of SES members (staff and volunteers) interstate. These arrangements cover: health, safety and well-being aspects including legal responsibilities; command and control; operational communications; media, public information and warnings; and unit dispatching.</p> <p>Along the Victorian-South Australian border, cross-border cooperation between VICSES and South Australia Emergency Services (SASES) supports are facilitated through local arrangements with individual SASES units. However, these arrangements will be formalised in a state-level MoU which is due to be finalised in March 2025.</p> <p>The VICSES will not be publicly releasing the relevant MoUs due to operational considerations.</p>	<p>VICSES</p>
<p>54. That the Victoria State Emergency Service undertake a strategic review of its resources, leadership and personnel allocation. This review should focus on enhancing communication systems, ensuring adequate availability of essential resources like rescue equipment, and implementing robust volunteer recruitment processes, support and training programs.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government will continue to listen to the needs of the VICSES and consider options for how the government can best support the organisation through standard budgetary processes.</p> <p>In December 2024, the State Government announced the expansion of the Fire Service Property Levy to an Emergency Services and Volunteer Fund (ESVF) and as part of the new fund, resulting in funding for lapsing programs for volunteer support and some training programs.</p>	<p>VICSES</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>55. That the Victorian Government increase funding and support for the Victoria State Emergency Service to enable a comprehensive upgrade of emergency communication technologies, ensure a steady supply of critical response resources, and expand volunteer recruitment and retention programs, thereby bolstering the agency’s capability to manage and respond to emergencies effectively.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government continues to listen to the needs of VICSES and is discussing options for how the government can best support the continued investment into the VICSES’s communications technology, critical response resources and volunteer support. This includes potential options relating to its base funding model to support sustainable growth for meeting the increasing demand on VICSES services due to the influence of climate change on extreme events, and how this may play out in different locations including areas of population growth.</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises the critical role VICSES provides during major emergencies and over the last five years has invested \$23.3 million to support the replacement of 56 Heavy Rescue Trucks and 7 Medium Rescue Trucks and \$145.32 million to fund 14 fit-for-purpose facilities, including 4 brand new VICSES units in growth corridors to bolster capacity.</p> <p>The new funding for emergency services announced by the Government in December 2024 included: \$70 million to establish a rolling fleet replacement program for VICSES and the CFA; almost \$30 million for training and support programs, and a doubling of the VESEP program, through the provision of an additional \$62 million over four years to ensure more volunteers have new or upgraded vehicles, equipment and better station facilities.</p>	<p>EMV</p>
<p>56. That the Victorian Government ensure that incident control centres include a mechanism for local expertise to be included in their operations and help inform processes to assist managing localised warnings and response.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government and its emergency services acknowledge the critical role the local community and their knowledge plays in emergencies - not only in response, but also during recovery from emergencies.</p> <p>As part of the regular review cycle of operational doctrine, EMV, along with other response agencies, will ensure the inclusion of local expertise into incident management operations is referenced.</p>	<p>EMV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		This includes reinforcing the use of local expertise in Incident Management Teams (IMTs) and emphasising the role councils and their personnel play in contributing to developing incident strategies and managing an emergency.	
57. That the Victorian Government increase funding to Shepparton and Echuca and Moama Search and Rescue squads to ensure optimal response capabilities in future emergencies.	Support in principle	<p>The Shepparton and Echuca-Moama Search and Rescue squads played an instrumental role in assisting their local community and surrounds during the flood event.</p> <p>Both the Shepparton and Echuca-Moama Search and Rescue squads are eligible to apply for state funding through the VESEP. VESEP is an annual grant program that supports Victorian emergency services volunteer groups, such as the Shepparton and Echuca and Moama Search and Rescue squads, to purchase essential equipment or make minor facility improvements so that they can continue their vital work. The VESEP is a competitive grants program and any applications for VESEP funding made by the Shepparton and Echuca-Moama Search and Rescue squads will be considered in line with the program's assessment criteria by a panel comprising representatives from emergency services organisations.</p> <p>Since 2015, the Victorian Government has provided the Shepparton and Echuca and Moama Search and Rescue squads more than \$1,100,000 through the VESEP.</p>	EMV
Flood Relief and Recovery			
58. That the Victorian Government, working with local councils, establish statewide operating guidelines for Emergency Relief Centres. These guidelines should include protocols on rapid activation, streamlined communication and resource mobilisation. Local councils should	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government recognises that councils play a critical role in delivering on the State's emergency management arrangements, including establishing Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs) to provide immediate and basic services to people affected by an emergency.</p> <p>Councils continue to undertake emergency management planning at the local level, including the development and maintenance of municipal level ERCs Standard Operating Procedures. Some councils, through regional partnerships or collaborations, have</p>	DGS



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>remain empowered to tailor protocols to meet local needs.</p>		<p>developed regional standard operating procedures for ERCs, and other clusters of regional councils are considering a similar approach. While these municipal arrangements are in place, there is currently no state level policy or guidance on how this occurs, such as the requirements to activate or operate an ERC.</p> <p>ERCs are resource-intensive, require rapid establishment, involve complex logistics and are required for unknown and varying periods of time. There is also little guidance on ERC alternatives like shower and power hubs.</p> <p>Challenges posed by recent large-scale events affecting multiple municipal districts highlight the need for greater guidance, more flexible and innovative approaches (such as resource sharing and outreach services), as well as clearer governance and cost recovery eligibility.</p> <p>State-level guidance will be developed by DGS, building on the knowledge and expertise of councils, and addressing areas requiring greater clarity, in order to support councils delivering this critical function for our community during an emergency.</p> <p>This state-level guidance is anticipated to be developed by June 2026.</p>	
<p>59. In line with Recommendation 58, that the Victorian Government, working with local councils, investigate options for emergency funding arrangements to assist operating Emergency Relief Centres and include these arrangements in statewide operating guidelines.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government continues to assist in addressing cost-recovery through long-standing funding arrangements in place to support certain operating costs associated with Emergency Relief Centres. This support relieves some of the financial burden that councils could experience following a disaster, in accordance with the Commonwealth - State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). This includes financial support via Category A of the DRFA, which supports the establishment and operation of relief centres.</p> <p>Where there is an opportunity in the future, state-level guidance should build on the knowledge and expertise of councils, and</p>	<p>ERV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		address areas requiring greater clarity in order to support councils delivering this critical function for or community during an emergency.	
60. That the Victorian Government plan and resource recovery hubs (including online access) sufficiently to fulfil their role in long-term community recovery and resilience building	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government recognises Recovery Hubs as a valuable resource and location for communities to visit in supporting their recovery needs.</p> <p>Following the 2022 Floods, the Community Recovery Hub program allocated funding to eligible councils and Alpine Resorts and Aboriginal led organisations to establish integrated Community Recovery Hubs. Programs like these remain accessible for financial support under the Commonwealth's DRFA.</p> <p>Recovery Hubs are a recent initiative from the state and have helped increase the capacity of the existing recovery centre process of councils.</p> <p>They work to ensure community recovery needs are well understood so evidence-based recovery interventions can be targeted with greatest benefit. These hubs also provide trauma-informed navigation of recovery services, information, and programs to support communities in recovery.</p> <p>Resourcing to enable the standup of Recovery Hubs is supported by government through council and agency resources. Planning for the location and composition of these Hubs is determined by Municipal Recovery Committees to ensure they are located in areas of greatest benefit to the community.</p> <p>Where supported by government following future events, there is an opportunity to consider greater flexibility in supporting mobile or online recovery hub options.</p>	ERV
61. That the Victorian Government simplify the application process for disaster recovery funding. This could include reducing paperwork,	Support in principle	Government-funded programs are provided with eligibility criteria specific to each program to ensure those experiencing genuine need receive the required support. These criteria, and the associated application process, also exist as preventive measure to address	ERV



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>providing hands-on assistance and investigating technology to streamline processes.</p>		<p>potential fraudulent access to government funds and address the requirements of the Commonwealth's Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). Every effort is made through recovery programs to minimise the burden of information required by those seeking access to government support, applying a trauma-informed approach that is sensitive to the changing needs of people along their recovery journey.</p> <p>Overall, the application process for disaster recovery funding is supported by government through establishing event-specific programs that support the unique needs and circumstances of those impacted by the event.</p> <p>Following recent events, individuals, households and small businesses have received assistance to access disaster recovery funding through the Recovery Support Program and Business Relief Advisory Service. Both programs are recognised as essential supports for supporting the recovery journey of individuals, households and business owners. These supports were available following the 2022 Floods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For businesses: The Business Recovery Advisory Service supported business owners to access government-funded one-on-one support from local business relief advisers. Services like this also assist small businesses to manage insurance and landlord issues, assess impacts and form strategies for recovery. • For primary producers: pre-agreed grant guidelines with the Commonwealth Government enables the Victorian Government to activate supports quickly in response to natural disasters. Primary producers are assisted with accessing support through the Rural Financial Counselling Service that is always available to provide hands-on 	



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>assistance and guidance. In the flood event financial support was provided to over 6,500 primary producers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For people: The Flood Recovery Support Program supported over 4,400 households, allowing them to access government-funded supports including mental health and wellbeing services, legal support, financial counselling, and connection to other services providing local recovery and social connection and cohesion. 	
<p>62. That the Victorian Government evaluate the criteria and funding arrangements for financial assistance post-disaster with a view to:</p> <p>a. better aligning support with costs of recovery</p> <p>b. proposing options for quickly deploying support mechanisms according to the scale and complexity of the event.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government is currently reviewing opportunities to enhance its application and administration of the financial assistance provided to States and Territories as part of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).</p> <p>These works continue on the back of long-standing governance arrangements into regional and local government areas to understand disaster impacts and then inform recovery need.</p> <p>As part of the Victoria Government’s response to the flood event, the Council Support Fund – co-funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments – enabled swift deployment of additional human resources for efficient recovery support, including post-disaster clean-up. Activities supported through the fund include the restoration of community services, collection and removal of debris deposited in council parks, reserves and community assets, waste transportation costs, and staffing.</p> <p>This financial support is in addition to other relief and recovery supports available to councils through the DRFA. Funding advances are provided to councils to support activation of local relief and recovery planning based on incurred expenditure and cash-flow challenges. These funds can be used to support emergency reconstruction works such as temporary repairs to roads which enable the community to move around safely.</p>	<p>ERV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
<p>63. That the Victorian Government review its framework for providing housing support following an environmental disaster. In particular, the Government should assess the application system to ensure that genuinely affected households are provided support in a timelier manner and to mitigate the risk of fraudulent claims.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government, in coordination with councils, continues to take an innovative approach to disaster recovery temporary accommodation planning, by applying program logic design that responds to the specific challenges and complex circumstances presented by each event.</p> <p>Ensuring individuals and families have access to emergency and temporary accommodation during and immediately after an event is one of the Victorian Government's top priorities. Following the flood event, the eligibility criteria for emergency accommodation were initially deliberately broad, ensuring all impacted individuals and families were housed and supported to address the acute need. The eligibility criteria was later amended to mitigate the risk of fraudulent claims once the program was better established</p> <p>As programs are delivered, program eligibility criteria is monitored to ensure supports remain fit for purpose and addresses areas of greatest need within the parameters of the funding provisions.</p> <p>Instances of fraudulent access to housing support were limited to fewer than 10 occasions out of over 2,200. The cases encountered involved individuals experiencing homelessness and, in every case, the Victorian Government supported these individuals to find more suitable supports outside of disaster recovery programs.</p>	<p>ERV</p>
<p>64. That the Victorian Government recognise caravan parks as essential businesses in disaster-prone areas as providers of housing and emergency support and ensure support is available (including grants) under DRFA to caravan park operators, including those operating on Crown Land.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government continues to engage with members of the Regional Emergency Management Planning Committees to validate all place-based accommodation options, including caravan parks and those on Crown Land. Temporary use of Crown land caravan parks for accommodation purposes will need to align with the land's reservation purposes and Crown land caravan park policies.</p> <p>The consideration of options for recognising caravan parks as an essential business, for the purposes of providing viable housing alternatives where accommodation options are limited, is an item to</p>	<p>ERV</p>



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		<p>be considered as part of ongoing review of opportunities for enhancing Victorian application of the Commonwealth’s Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). The DRFA Strategic Review will be conducted over two years, with improvement opportunities delivered by June 2026.</p> <p>Further enabling this work is Victoria’s long-standing position on interjurisdictional governance bodies and forums that help inform and influence national disaster recovery funding policy.</p>	
<p>65. That the Victorian Government, noting that repair of natural environment is often overlooked in disaster recovery, assess and make funding available for natural environment and restoration.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government continues to assess all disaster impacts, risks and recovery needs, including the natural environment.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has provided \$158 million to support urgent and immediate flood recovery works on public land across the state. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$14.4 million in flood recovery grants provided to 129 volunteer Committees of Management to manage recovery of valued community assets on public land. • environmental assessment of 29 contaminated land sites • over 700 threatened species assessments, more than 2,000 ha of terrestrial weed control in flood-affected areas, and over 580,000 native fish stocked in waterways in northern Victoria • reopening more than 920 kilometres of public land roads and over 200 recreation sites on public land • supported Traditional Owner Groups with flood recovery funding. DEECA has supported the priority flood impacted sites, including engagement with Traditional Owners, surveying of cultural heritage values, and rehabilitation works. <p>Standing governance arrangements across government align to the five lines of recovery that, together, provide for consideration of state recovery needs following an event – these lines of recovery include:</p>	<p>ERV</p>



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		people and wellbeing, business and economy, buildings and infrastructure, Aboriginal culture and healing, and environment and biodiversity.	
<p>66. To assist with ongoing clean-up of flood-affected areas following disasters, that the Victorian Government establish a dedicated financial support program for local businesses involved in debris removal and restoration efforts. This should include reimbursement mechanisms for businesses, such as earthmoving companies, that contributed equipment and personnel to the clean-up but suffered significant financial losses doing so.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government continues to support the flood event clean-up and disposal of disaster debris and waste</p> <p>The prompt clean-up and disposal of disaster debris and waste is recognised as critical in enabling broader community, land, infrastructure and economic recovery. Government has supported these activities through standing arrangements and event-based initiatives (including gate fee rebates and waste levy waivers) with all expenses paid in a timely manner. Funding commitments are also delivered within the parameters of the program being made available to councils, communities, delegated land managers and recovery partners. As the intensity and frequency of climate extremes is likely to increase in the future in the context of climate change, an assessment of the approach to funding is timely, to ensure the approach is fit for the future.</p> <p>The Council Support Fund, established on 16 October 2022 and co-funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments – provides funding for councils to undertake immediate recovery works, including clean-up activities and restoration of local facilities and services. Activities supported through the fund include the restoration of community services, collection and removal of debris deposited in council parks, reserves and community assets, waste transportation costs, and staffing. The upfront funding to councils enabled swift deployment of additional human resources for efficient post-disaster clean-up.</p> <p>This financial support is in addition to other relief and recovery supports available to councils through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. These arrangements are supported by the Government through funding-advances to councils to support</p>	<p>ERV</p>



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		activation of local relief and recovery planning based on incurred expenditure and evidence of cash-flow challenges based on their self-declared impacts. These funds can be used to support immediate and emergency reconstruction works such as temporary repairs to roads to enable the community to move around safely amongst other Category A and Category B works.	
67. That the Victorian Government pay its bills on time, especially following natural disasters.	Support in principle	The Victorian Government maintains standing arrangements, including accommodations for disaster-specific circumstances, to ensure timely payment of all government expenses following an event.	ERV
68. That the Victorian Government work to support better collaboration between local communities, contractors, and government agencies, ensuring swift deployment of additional human resources for efficient post-disaster cleanup efforts.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government maintains standing clean-up arrangements to support the collaboration between local communities, contractors and government agencies.</p> <p>These arrangements specify the requirement for appointed clean-up providers to support collaboration with local communities and contractors. This includes sourcing of subcontractors from local impacted areas and establishing recovery program operations in these same areas.</p> <p>This was applied for the flood event, with clean-up hubs established in impacted areas. These hubs acted as operations bases for assessment and building works in impacted areas. These hubs were also used as operations bases for volunteer clean-up agency – Disaster Relief Australia – which enabled them to swiftly deploy additional human resources.</p>	ERV
69. That the Victorian Government collaborate with local authorities and community groups to develop and implement a debris management strategy and ensure that it aligns with broader disaster management	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government continues to seek out opportunities to partner with councils to prioritise clean-up activity efforts and work with existing facilities in the area affected.</p> <p>During the flood event, the Victorian Government partnered with local council and used Mt Scobie Resource Recovery Centre in Kyabram as a centralised debris sorting, recycling and disposal facility. By</p>	ERV



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
plans as part of future-proofing for environmental events.		<p>identifying and using existing local infrastructure, debris and waste were able to be removed more effectively.</p> <p>Lessons from this process will be integrated into future emergency waste management programs, creating a more resilient system able to be called upon in future disasters.</p>	
<p>70. That the Victorian Government develop community based initiatives and resource-sharing mechanisms, fostering resilience and solidarity among towns facing challenges from environmental disasters. These should ensure timely and effective responses to future crises, leveraging collective strength and kindness to aid in the recovery process.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of communities having the opportunity to help shape their recovery journey. The Victorian Government has developed tools that seek to provide guidance regarding how to assist communities in shaping and progressing their recovery. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Recovery Toolkit: made available in April 2023, the Community Recovery Toolkit provides guidance and tools to support communities impacted by emergencies to establish and shape their community recovery processes. Its core purpose is to assist affected communities – both community members and councils – after an emergency to define and lead their community recovery process, with support from government agencies and others. • Emergency Recovery Resource Portal: made available in May 2022, the Emergency Recovery Resource Portal provides a central point of access to key recovery resources and guidance to better enable community-led recovery and resilience practices. <p>The Victorian Government also notes that communities and organisations throughout Victoria are also adopting the Community Based Emergency Management (CBEM) approach to better connect and work together before, during and after emergencies.</p> <p>The CBEM approach provides communities with opportunities to lead in decision making processes that affect them, while inviting people from emergency services, government, business, industry, non-</p>	<p>ERV</p>



Recommendation	Government response	Commentary	Responsible authority
		<p>government organisations and the not-for-profit sector to also participate.</p> <p>An online CBEM portal is also being developed by the Victorian Government for communities and organisations to better connect and share ideas, information and plans. It is anticipated that this will be completed by December 2025.</p>	
<p>71. That the Victorian Government provide long-term funding contracts for mental health services in flood-affected regions, with a focus to securing dedicated mental health professionals and effective service delivery in communities impacted by natural disasters.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of supporting the mental health needs of communities impacted by natural disasters.</p> <p>The Government is undertaking significant, long-term reform of mental health and wellbeing in Victoria, following the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System (published 2021). This includes investing in more community-based mental health services, closer to where people live, and growing the mental health and wellbeing workforce.</p> <p>As part of this reform, the Victorian Government is investing in Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals and Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs across Victoria. Thousands of Victorians have accessed free treatment, care and support offered by these services over the past few years, including many who have been impacted by natural disasters.</p> <p>Following the 2022 flood event, mental health supports were provided to impacted communities by Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs. These pre-existing Hubs ensured more people had access to walk-in mental health care and support, without the need for a GP referral. Pre-existing services, like Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs, provide a suitable platform from which government can scale-up its support to community, a practice that was applied during the flood event and continues to provide support to those requiring mental health and wellbeing support.</p>	<p>ERV</p>



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		<p>The Victorian Government also continues to work with the Commonwealth Government to explore opportunities to surge existing mental health services managed by Primary Health Networks (PHNs) for flood-impacted communities. PHNs are funded to manage health regions. They assess the needs of their community and commission health services so that people in their region can get the coordinated health care where and when they need it.</p>	
<p>72. That following the outcomes of the House of Representatives' Inquiry into insurers' responses to 2022 major floods claims, the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government that it take action to ensure that residents and businesses in flood-affected areas can obtain and maintain necessary insurance.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>The Victorian Government maintains a standing relationship with the Insurance Council of Australia to assist in coordinating insurance-related engagements and communicating issues and emerging risks during events.</p> <p>As noted in the Inquiry into Insurers' Responses to 2022 Major Floods Claims Report, the regulation of the consumer insurance industry is a Commonwealth matter. The Victorian Government's efforts to seek improved insurance outcomes for those impacted by disasters is highlighted throughout this report, with Victoria being the only jurisdiction advocating into the Commonwealth review.</p>	<p>ERV</p>
<p>73. That the Victorian Government's response to this Inquiry identifies the responsible authorities for each recommendation and provides a timeframe for action and reports back to Parliament on progress made implementing the recommendations.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p>	<p>Where the relevant information is known, it has been included in the table of recommendations. If this information is not known yet, it will be amended in the coming months.</p>	<p>EMV</p>