

Campaspe Municipal Recovery Plan

October 2022
Major Flood Event





Recovery

Disaster recovery, as defined by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), is the process of coming to terms with the impacts of a disaster and managing the disruptions and changes caused, which can result, for some people, in a new way of living. Being 'recovered' is being able to lead a life that individuals and communities value living, even if it is different to the life they were leading before the disaster event.

The impacts of disasters on affected individuals and communities can be profound, long lasting and life changing. Therefore, recovery is a long-term, multilayered social and developmental process that is more than simply the replacement of what has been destroyed and the rehabilitation of those affected. At its centre, recovery is the complex process of individuals and communities who have been impacted by a disaster working to resolve the impacts that the event has had on the trajectory of their lives.

Recovery outcomes include the restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities of a disaster-affected community or society. Alignment of outcomes with the principles of sustainable development and 'build back better', to avoid or reduce future disaster risk is key. (Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook, 2018).

The Municipal Recovery Committee's Role

The role of the Municipal Recovery Committee (MRC) is to support communities across Campaspe Shire impacted by the October 2022 flood event, by coordinating the flood recovery processes and supporting those impacted by flooding. This involves coordinating information, resources and services, establishing priorities and ensuring that all residents are adequately supported during this time.

The MRC is a link between local, regional and state government departments and agencies, Community Recovery Committee/s, affected community and Council. It also provides a mechanism for community and interest groups within areas impacted by the October 2022 flood event to gain direct access to the formal recovery processes at municipal, regional and state levels.

The forming of the MRC is consistent with the Victorian emergency management arrangements and the Campaspe Shire Council Municipal Emergency Management Plan. Under these arrangements Council is the responsible agency to form, lead and support the MRC. Additional information about the role of individual agencies in the recovery process across the social, economic, built and natural environments can be found here: [Recovery | Emergency Management Victoria \(emv.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.emv.vic.gov.au).

About this Plan

This Plan provides an overview of recovery activities to be delivered across Campaspe Shire in response to the October 2022 Floods.

This Plan will be reviewed annually or in response to changing circumstances or the release of new information such as the findings from the Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria.

About our Municipality

Campaspe Shire has a land area of 4,519 km² and includes the townships of Echuca, Kyabram, Rochester, Lockington, Gunbower, Rushworth, Stanhope and Tongala as well as many other smaller areas outside of these main townships.

Approximately 38,545 people live in the Shire, with 32.4% over 60 years of age.





October 2022 Major Flood Event

Following wetter than average winter and spring periods, from 6 October 2022, heavy rainfall and severe thunderstorms resulted in riverine flooding across multiple river catchments in Victoria and NSW. Locally, this resulted in widespread major flooding along the Campaspe and Murray rivers which primarily impacted the township of Rochester, but also impacted the townships of Echuca, Gunbower, Torrumbarry and many other small rural communities within the municipality.

Tragically, one human life was lost in Rochester in this flood event.

Major impacts for residents across the municipality included:

- Inundation of many thousands of properties, with varying degrees of impacts to residences, outbuildings and infrastructure;
- Displacement of thousands of residents in response to the flood event and threat, with a number of evacuation orders declared post the flood peak; and
- Short-term isolation of many people both in residential and rural areas due to widespread road inaccessibility and closures.

Rochester and surrounding townships were hardest hit, with over 800 homes either damaged or uninhabitable. Over the four days post the initial impact more than 400 Rochester residents were relocated to both Echuca and Bendigo Emergency Relief Centres, which operated for up to 35 days. The Elmore Village was set up in November 2022 and housed 350 Rochester residents at its peak, with 110 residents still in place in April 2023. More than 70 per cent of Rochester residents were still not back in their homes some seven months post the event. Of these, 250 households were living in caravans on their impacted properties, with many living in makeshift accommodation such as sheds, while others had to source accommodation outside of the municipality.

At the time of writing (18 months post the event), although some Rochester residents have been able to rebuild and return to their homes, it is estimated that more than 200 homes are still uninhabitable.

Numerous impacts of the 2022 flood event were also observed across the wider economic, health and well-being, social and environmental spaces. Many of these, and the toll on mental health and wellbeing are incalculable and will be felt for years to come.

October 2022 Major Flood Event

Impacts across the Municipality

- More than 1,500 residential properties across the municipality with minor – severe flood damage (from initial damage assessments).
- Significant commercial and industrial properties with minor – severe flooding.
- Flood water/inundation damage to a significant portion of electricity network infrastructure and customer electrical installations.
- Extensive damage across transport network, including bridges, culverts, crossings, road surfaces and road shoulders resulting in road closures and isolation of some streets/communities.
- Severe damage to retail and commercial precincts.
- Immeasurable costs to the economy, business and tourism with significant impacts on revenue, infrastructure, employee availability and issues around access to markets and clients and for restocking and for visitors to the region.
- Loss of employment and reduced staffing hours.
- Extensive damage and loss to agricultural properties and primary production including:
 - flooding of close to 50% of farm area.
 - the loss of more than 700 animals.
 - thousands of km of fencing.
 - more than 30,000 tonnes of crop.
 - more than 27,000 tonnes of fodder.
 - extensive damage to irrigation infrastructure and dams.
- Short-term restrictions to ambulance services in Rochester.
- Decreased capacity of local emergency services, requiring backfilling from the region.
- Some schools temporarily closed across municipality. In Rochester the three schools, kindergarten and childcare were significantly impacted and remained closed until at least early 2023. Extended travel time resulted for students to Bendigo schools or temporary facilities.
- Short and long-term displacement of community residents including tenants and many elderly and vulnerable persons with reduced family support.
- Significant numbers of residents leaving the community.
- Severe mental health and wellbeing impacts on community.
- Impacts to spiritual and religious wellbeing of some residents.
- Disruption to community events and volunteer capacity.
- Lack of access to damaged sporting and recreational facilities, cultural/religious and community facilities and open space.
- Ongoing financial challenges to family budgets while rebuilding.
- Large amounts of flood debris scattered across public and private properties, as well as conservation areas, some of which included contaminated materials.
- Establishment of temporary transfer stations for short-term waste management.



- Significant impact to health care services; hospital and aged care facilities closed in Rochester and still undergoing rebuild 18 months post flood event; Relocation of Rochester aged care and acute care patients to several locations along with the redeployment of REDHS staff.
- Significant increase in waste volume disposed at Council waste facilities.
- Extensive damage to wildlife habitat, including nesting and breeding habitat for the endangered Plains Wanderer.



October 2022 Major Flood Event

January 2024 Rochester Flood Event

Between Boxing Day 2023 and 8 January 2024, a series of storm events and significant rainfall occurred across the Campaspe catchment.

The January 2024 Rochester flood event ensued with significant flooding of the Rochester township and surrounding rural properties. Preparedness and response from emergency response agencies and community included a community meeting, an evacuation order, targeted sandbagging and preparedness activities, short-term operation of an emergency relief centre in Echuca and a recovery centre in Rochester, along with short-term closures of some businesses and services within the town.



This event was significantly smaller in magnitude and duration than the October 2022 flood, with the main impact being the flooding of two Rochester homes over floor height. However, the impact of recurring emergency warnings, disaster events and the expectation of another 'big flood' exacerbated mental health impacts for many Rochester residents. This was particularly impactful for a town still very much in the recovery phase from the 2022 major flood event.

Stakeholders Involved in Recovery

AgBiz Assist	Local churches
Agriculture Victoria	Local community groups (Lions/Apex/ Rotary/RSL)
Anglicare Victoria	Local community representatives
ARC Justice	Local schools & Early Learning Centres
Business Victoria	Local sporting clubs
Campaspe Shire Council	Mind Australia
Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd	National Centre for Farmer Health
Chambers of Commerce	North Central Catchment Management Authority
Coliban Water	Parks Victoria
Country Fire Authority	Partners in Wellbeing EACH
Department of Education	Public Transport Victoria
Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action	Regional Development Victoria
Department of Families Fairness and Housing	Rochester Community House
Department of Health	Rochester Community Recovery Committee
Echuca Community House	Rochester Business Network
Echuca Regional Health	Rochester & Elmore District Health Services
Emergency Recovery Victoria	Rural Aid
Emergency Management Victoria	Services Australia
Goulburn Murray Water	The Salvation Army
Johns Lyng Group	Victoria State Emergency Services
Lockington Community House	Victoria Police
Local businesses	Youth Affairs Council Victoria



Recovery Target Areas

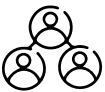
 <p>1 Health and Wellbeing (Mental & Physical)</p>	 <p>2 Building Social Connectedness</p>
 <p>3 Improve Flood Planning</p>	 <p>4 Building Community Preparedness and Resilience</p>
 <p>5 Tourism Recovery</p>	 <p>6 Agriculture and Business Recovery</p>
 <p>7 Public and Private Infrastructure Rebuilding</p>	 <p>8 Residential Housing</p>
 <p>9 Building Inclusive Communities</p>	 <p>10 Natural Environment Recovery</p>

Recovery Target Areas



1 Health and Wellbeing (Mental & Physical)

- 1.1 Continue to advocate for long term mental health funding to address issues affecting communities post flood, in a planned and sustainable manner, recognising that short term contracts are an inhibitor to recovery.
- 1.2 Continue to provide opportunities and training for the community to develop skills and knowledge targeting improving mental health.
- 1.3 Collaborate and assist with coordination of mental health service providers to deliver on the ground support to impacted communities that address community needs.
- 1.4 Empower stakeholders to identify and report emerging issues in the community and actively work to resolve same.
- 1.5 Investigate and implement ways community can share their stories and experiences.
- 1.6 Support and promote messaging surrounding general health and wellbeing concerns post disaster, such as mosquito infestation and mould risks.
- 1.7 Advocate for and support the reinstatement of health care services including acute care, aged care, clinics and allied care.



2 Building Social Connectedness

- 2.1 Continue to build connections between communities and agencies to support recovery and build community resilience for future events.
- 2.2 Implement programs that strengthen healthy and respectful connections within communities.
- 2.3 Improve and encourage cohesion between community groups.
- 2.4 Support access to recovery information across all impacted communities.



3 Improve Flood Planning

- 3.1 Support the undertaking of the Rochester Flood Study and input into the Flood Mitigation Plan.
- 3.2 Support agencies to engage meaningfully with the community.
- 3.3 Advocate for improved communication processes around disaster messaging to community.
- 3.4 Advocate for improved forecasting and flood height predictions impacting the Campaspe River inflows, including an increase in the number of appropriately placed gauges sufficient to support accurate predictions.

Recovery Target Areas



4 Build Community Preparedness and Resilience

- 4.1 Establish mechanisms to build awareness and understanding of the impacts of the flood across the municipality.
- 4.2 Support community leaders to implement events and activities aimed at preparing for future disasters.
- 4.3 Support communities to develop and implement their own locality-based disaster plans focused on the first 72 hours.
- 4.4 Continue to provide opportunities for our community leaders to take on key leadership roles within recovery and preparedness.
- 4.5 Coordinate and facilitate communication between community groups providing recovery functions.
- 4.6 Continue to facilitate opportunities for community to access insurers.
- 4.7 Continue to provide opportunities for access to support services, e.g. legal services.
- 4.8 Advocate for implementation of the recommendations of flood studies.
- 4.9 Advocate for improved access to information and insurance services immediately post disaster.
- 4.10 Advocate for funding opportunities and support for community groups.
- 4.11 Advocate for essential services and infrastructure providers to invest in key infrastructure to minimise service interruption, including but not limited to services such as Health and Aged Care facilities, Coliban Water, NBN, Telstra (and similar providers), Powercor and VicRoads.



5 Tourism Recovery

- 5.1 Promote visitation to Campaspe by advertising local events.
- 5.2 Support the attraction and development of new and existing events to drive economic recovery.
- 5.3 Provide support and funding opportunities to local tourism operators.
- 5.4 Develop a destination marketing campaign to encourage day trips and expenditure into the region.



6 Agriculture and Business Recovery

- 6.1 Collaborate with local business networks to develop and deliver promotional campaigns around supporting local businesses and community groups.
- 6.2 Provide a coordinated approach to business recovery support and communication.
- 6.3 Advocate for improved fit-for-purpose grant and support programs for both agriculture and business.
- 6.4 Identify key impacts to businesses and learnings from the October 2022 Floods and advocate for potential solutions (e.g. road access, bus/truck routes, flood notifications and agistment coordination).

Recovery Target Areas



7 Public and Private Infrastructure Rebuilding

- 7.1 Advocate for flood resilience to be built into major transportation routes to ensure connectivity.
- 7.2 Identify mechanisms to build additional resilience into the irrigation and rural drainage networks to relieve future flood impacts.
- 7.3 Prioritise the reinstatement of roads and access.
- 7.4 Advocate to all levels of government and provide guidance to improve recovery funding support systems.
- 7.5 Continue the restoration of essential community infrastructure.
- 7.6 Advocate for infrastructure projects in Place Based Plans to have a focus on resilience principles.



8 Residential Housing

- 8.1 Consider a working group of the MRC for a residential rebuild program to conduct gap analysis to an expedited return of residents to their homes.
- 8.2 Advocate for future opportunities for residential rebuild.
- 8.3 Collaborate and coordinate with the building industry, including appropriate partners such as insurance companies to develop a coordinated and timely response.



9 Building Inclusive Communities

- 9.1 Promote inclusion and participation with a focus on community diversity.
- 9.2 Provide pathways for First Nations People to self-determine their own recovery.
- 9.3 Provide opportunities for community to access education about being more inclusive.



10 Natural Environment Recovery

- 10.1 Establish and coordinate a joint approach to the management of invasive species.
- 10.2 Support a coordinated approach to waterway and impacted land restoration and clean up.
- 10.3 Support traditional owners with the inspection, restoration and recovery of cultural significant sites and locations.
- 10.4 Prioritise restoration and recovery of nature-based tourism infrastructure and locations.
- 10.5 Prioritise restoration of the wetlands and natural areas along the rivers with significant biodiversity value.
- 10.6 Provide support to agencies assisting with recovery clean-up activities.
- 10.7 Continue to advocate for ongoing waste support for residents.



Enablers of Recovery

- Provide the structures and administrative support to enable good governance for flood recovery activity planning and implementation.
- Advocate for improved state response and recovery funding support for protracted flood events.
- Coordinate cross-agency communications to provide a holistic picture of recovery activities.
- Maintain a 'one-stop-shop' recovery portal on the Council website.
- Provide wellbeing support programs for all agency staff and recovery volunteers.
- Provide advocacy for improved legal and insurance support to impacted communities.



Recovery Evaluation

The MRC is committed to continuously improving recovery coordination and services through documenting, sharing and incorporating lessons learned into future planning and procedures.

To support this, a number of committee representatives and agency/organisations have completed submissions into the Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria.