

November 2016

Blackwood Community Emergency Management Plan



Contents

1. Aim and Objectives	5
2. Community Based Goals and Solutions	5
3. Local Priorities.....	8
4. Supporting People 'Before, During and After' Emergencies.....	11
5. Table of Actions – 2016/2017	14
6. Supporting Information	19
Nominated representatives and key contacts	20
Blackwood Community Profile.....	21

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The community and agencies working together

Introduction

The Blackwood Community Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) has been developed by and on behalf of the local community. As such, the Blackwood Community Emergency Management Planning Group acknowledges all who have participated and contributed towards the development of this plan.

This document is to be managed and distributed by the Blackwood CEMP Group. All feedback and opportunities for greater community participation to implement and improve this plan will be gratefully received.

The priority for this plan is to support the Blackwood community to become safer and more resilient to the impacts of natural hazards, including bushfire, flood and landslide. A range of other potential emergency situations for Blackwood residents include fallen trees, car accidents and search and rescue operations in the bush.

It is expected that these efforts will also support people to be better prepared to manage and become more resilient to other extreme events including storms, heatwaves and pandemics.

Discussion to develop this CEMP started in 2014, with a draft completed in November ready for the 2016/17 summer season. Further consultation and engagement with the community including a Scenario Planning Day (2016/17 summer season) is anticipated.

The CEMP is considered to be a 'live' document that will be regularly updated and improved to remain relevant for the community and broader stakeholders. This approach provides opportunities for more people to become involved, while allowing the plan to evolve and reflect the values and needs of the community over time.

The collaborative work to date has been effective in strengthening relationships between the community and supporting agencies. Working together has assisted people to better understand and support the interests and values of locals and visitors, whilst working in partnership with organisations to improve the management of risks. The geographic area of interest includes the local township and surrounding areas of Blackwood, incorporating Barrys Reef, Golden Point and Simmons Reef.

The Blackwood CEMP Group welcomes opportunities to connect with broader stakeholders to build a safer and more resilient future.

The success of this plan will rely on the support, participation and feedback provided by the local and broader community. It is recognised that building and strengthening relationships through these and other community based processes, is just as important as developing the plan itself.

A series of steps has supported initial stakeholders to work together and generate the information captured in this plan. This process has enabled these people to identify and discuss local priorities, including opportunities, hazards and risks. Local initiatives and actions are listed and tracked in Section 6 (table of actions) of this plan. Each step aims to promote discussion and guide the community to build on strengths to shape the future, whilst becoming safer and more resilient in the short, medium and long term.

The local priorities and actions are expected to evolve over time and opportunities to integrate with other local community based plans should be explored. Completed actions are also recorded to provide a summary of achievements and areas for improvement.

This plan is considered a small but significant contribution toward building local community resilience. The Blackwood CEMP Group welcomes any comments, contributions and feedback about the information contained in this plan.

1. Aim and Objectives

Aim

The aim of this plan is to support people to build relationships and develop solutions, to become safer and more resilient to the impacts of extreme weather events and emergencies. This will be achieved by working together to manage the priority risks and consequences of natural hazards, including local bushfires, floods and landslides.

Each of the following objectives are to contribute toward achieving this aim.

Objective 1

Support the local and visiting community of Blackwood to be safer and better prepared to manage and minimise the impacts of natural hazards and emergencies, before, during and after each event.

Objective 2

Identify what is important to the local community, and in partnership with relevant land/owners and managers, ensure that locally significant social, economic and environmental values and support systems are recognised and well managed, before, during and after emergencies.

Objective 3

Support the local community to actively participate, and improve relationships through the further development and implementation of this plan.

Objective 4

Ensure that the investment in managing community priorities and risk contributes toward strengthened relationships, increased community safety levels and long-term resilience.



2. Community Based Goals and Solutions

The following goals have been developed to reflect the views and contributions provided by local community volunteers, including members of the Blackwood Fire Brigade, Blackwood Action Group (BAG), Blackwood Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Blackwood Community Fire Refuge Working Group. Many of these members are now involved in the Blackwood CEMP Group.

Also recognised is the support provided by the Bushfire Building Council of Australia (BBCA), staff from the Department of Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Country Fire Authority (CFA), Victoria Police (VicPol), Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and Moorabool Shire Council (MSC).

Short Term Goal

The short-term goal is for the local and visiting community of Blackwood to be informed of, and safer from, the impacts of natural events such as heatwave, bushfire, flood and landslide, and other events such as search and rescue and loss of utility services.

Medium Term Goal

While becoming safer, working with the community including Blackwood's own businesses and tourism operators is an important factor for building community resilience. Closer working relationships with the BBKA, agency staff including DELWP, the CFA and Council will ensure proactive management in risk mitigation becomes a priority.

Long Term Goals

Support the community of Blackwood to build on its strengths and develop a preferred future that is safe, connected and sustainable for people and their homes, business and the environment. Empowering people to become safer and more resilient when living in and visiting Blackwood will be a priority. This will be supported by assisting people to better understand and manage the risks toward life and property, including the long term goal for Blackwood to become a BAL 29 town.





Working with the community to:

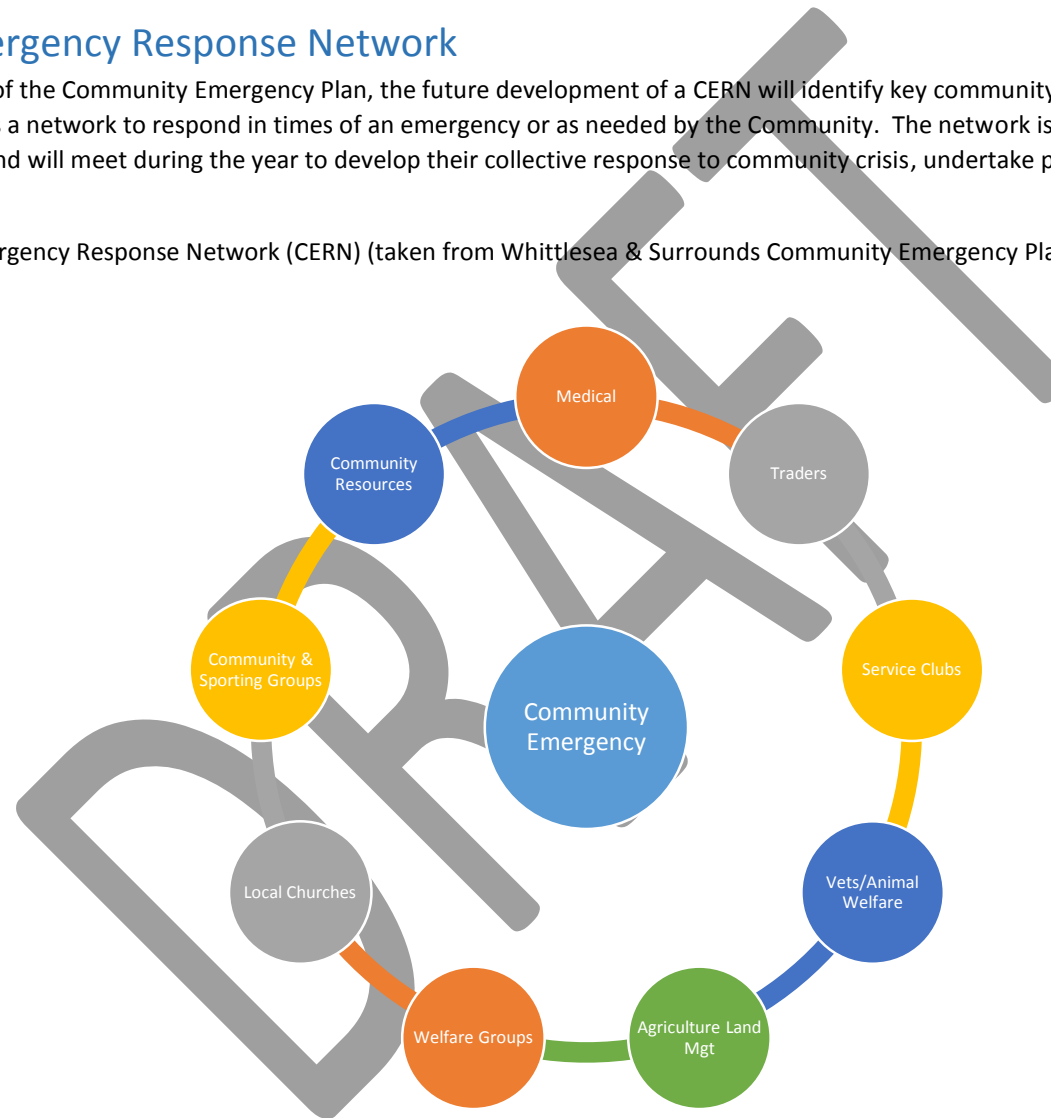
- Be better connected – before, during and after.
- ‘Map’ the local community profile and priorities.
- Understand local priority hazards and risks.
- Develop scenarios, actions and solutions.
- Better prepare, respond, recover and rebuild.
- Aim for long term resilience to ensure community viability and survival.



3. Community Emergency Response Network

Consistent with the aims of the Community Emergency Plan, the future development of a CERN will identify key community organisations, individuals and resources that will come together as a network to respond in times of an emergency or as needed by the Community. The network is based on identified community sectors (as per the model diagram) and will meet during the year to develop their collective response to community crisis, undertake planning and risk assessment and receive training.

Figure 1: Community Emergency Response Network (CERN) (taken from Whittlesea & Surrounds Community Emergency Plan 2015)



4. Local Priorities

The following priorities have been developed for 2016/17 and will be reviewed each year in August. Blackwood CEMP Group will continue to connect and seek greater involvement with the community, agencies and Moorabool Shire Council for assistance to:

- Support the Blackwood Fire Brigade and agencies to provide timely, tailored and relevant emergency information to the community. This includes through the local Blackwood CFA training days and Community Fire Refuge testing process.
- Support local volunteers to develop a network/group (e.g. community fire guard group or equivalent) to connect the local community for activation during emergencies. Promotion of this through CFA Sunday will be undertaken.
- Develop an information pack for tourism operators and business within the Blackwood area with an easily identifiable Blackwood CEMP Group packaging to promote the project.
- Identify key documentation, flyers, handouts and inserts for inclusion in a promotion pack for Blackwood Community Emergency Management Planning to assist in building resilience throughout the community. For example, The Fire Guardian produced by the CFA provides further useful information (included at end).
- Develop a map insert that identifies all trafficable routes throughout the Blackwood and forest area to assist visitors and locals in the event of an emergency.
- Work with tourist operators and accommodation providers to develop appropriate plans and information for staff, clients and guests.
- Support local residents and business to use 'Resilience Month' in October to work with agencies and the Blackwood CEMP Group to prepare their own individual, household and business plans.
- Work with the BBCA, DELWP and CFA to ensure that community risks identified are incorporated into other fire and emergency management plans and mitigation works.
- Invite the community to work with the Blackwood CEMP Group to participate in relevant scenarios to test their plans and be better prepared to make more informed decisions before, during and after emergencies.
- Work with Emergency Management Victoria to support this CEMP to become live on the online mapping system (EM COP)
- Support the testing of operational plans including working with CFA and Moorabool Shire Council to annually test and exercise the Blackwood Community Fire Refuge, including testing the alert siren and practising town evacuations.
- Work with agency staff and the BBCA to identify risk ratings for each property in the Blackwood area and support the community to better understand and manage their individual and shared risks.
- Work with the Moorabool Shire Municipal Emergency Management Planning (MEMP) Committee on mutual priorities.

- Work with VicRoads to ensure that the priority access and egress road for the Blackwood Community can remain open unless unsafe to do so.

- Work with the Moorabool Shire to support a chipping/mulching day or location point for removal of hazardous vegetation to be held in Blackwood prior to the fire season.

- Present this plan to be recognised by the Municipal Shire MEMP Committee.

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5. Supporting People 'Before, During and After' Emergencies



The role of the Blackwood CEMP Group in emergency management is to support the connection between the local community and emergency management organisations at a local community level. Whilst this aims to assist before, during and after emergency events, this is not an operational role.

To achieve this role Blackwood CEMP Group must have a recognised and strong working relationship with the BBCA, Blackwood Fire Brigade, CFA, SES, DELWP, Parks Victoria, Victoria Police and Moorabool Shire Council.

This community based plan and support role of the Blackwood CEMP Group aims to assist locals, visitors, business and organisations to have a voice and be safer and better prepared by providing a local connection for people to:

- Be aware and monitor local environmental conditions and forecasts.
- Have local contacts for people to seek information, help and advice.
- Be aware of local issues, including priority values and risk associated with



heat stress, bushfire, flood and landslide.

- Be prepared with their own plan – and have an alternative plan with a number of fall back positions.
- Be connected and contactable through the local Blackwood communication system (to be developed). This will require clear trigger points and primary messages from the control agency such as CFA or SES.
- Be ready to take simple steps and move out of harm's way.
- Be aware of the safety limitations in the bush and what to expect when an emergency event occurs i.e. community and individual plans cannot depend entirely on emergency services.
- Become involved in developing and practicing local scenarios, to be better prepared for emergency situations involving bushfire, flood and landslide.
- Know where to find information and advice at key points in the town, to make safer and more informed decisions as conditions and emergency situations change before, during and after the event.

Working together as part of the community

This support role of the Blackwood CEMP Group aims to increase connections, communications and information flow, while supporting the community to integrate with the plans, systems and support provided by the Blackwood Fire Brigade, emergency management organisations and Moorabool Shire Council.

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This provides people with the opportunity to be better connected and prepared with:

- Up-to-date and accurate local information
- Effective local warnings and alerts.
- Advice to have their own safe and appropriate shelter options, e.g. well prepared homes, bunkers and the Blackwood Community Fire Refuge.
- Safer and appropriate evacuation plans and escape routes.
- Alternative local fall back positions e.g. cleared areas such as the reserve.
- Last resort shelter options including the Community Fire Refuge.
- Empower local emergency services including the Fire Brigade.
- Ability to access first-aid support and seek further medical assistance if required.
- Back up stores of community essentials (e.g. food, water, blankets)
- External support through agencies, volunteers, groups etc.
- Links to local government and agency decision-making processes and programs.

It also provides Blackwood with a locally nominated and representative leadership group, recognised for having:

- Working relationships with local government, emergency management organisations, community volunteer groups and networks.
- Effective local community engagement processes to provide a community voice in collaborative decision making processes.
- Connections to support the local social, economic and environmental assets and value of Blackwood.
- Stories of success and key learning from mistakes.
- Connections with local people who can help others including those with special needs.
- Access to external, prepared and trained people and equipment e.g. CERT volunteers and support vehicles.
- The ability to connect and support the assistance provided through relief and recovery processes including rebuilding.
- The ability to advocate with MSC, relevant tourism bodies and government departments during the recovery phase, to enable a rapid return of visitors to support affected businesses.

6. Table of Actions – 2016/2017

ACTION	LEAD	SUPPORT	DUE BY	COMPLETE	COMMENTS
Update contacts list and distribute.	BCEMP	Community members	30 December 2016	Not commenced	This list will support the development of the engagement and communications plan.
Complete first draft CEMP and launch with community.	BCEMP	Local fire brigade Council Agencies EMV	30 December 2016	Underway	Launch at scenario or community event.
Support the community to receive locally relevant information regarding emergencies in the area.	BCEMP	Local fire brigade	30 December 2016		Provide the Blackwood Fire Brigade and other response agencies with a local community connection/focal point/system to distribute timely, tailored and relevant information about local emergencies in the area. This aims to enhance communication levels, for people to make more informed decisions. It does not replace the information provided by centralised systems including agency/official websites, phone apps etc.
Support the local community to develop their own plans and integrate with community-based plans.	BCEMP/Local CFA BBCA	Community Fire Brigade lead agencies		Ongoing	Develop opportunities for individuals to develop plans and integrate with community level plans. Blackwood CEMP to work with BBCA and local CFA to have a big impact on CFA Sunday or at other Bushfire Planning workshops. A better understanding is required of what is a defensible house and what is a non-defensible house, given 92% of homes are lost through ember attacks. This has implications for how people prepare and implement their fire plans. The BBCA risk rating app is to be tested in Blackwood.
Meet with agencies to work on solutions to local identified hazards i.e. weeds, grass. Fire access tracks etc.	BCEMP	Council CFA DELWP BBCA		Ongoing	Works undertaken and on agency and Council works programs.
Support the Blackwood CFA and Regional CFA to undertake annual exercises and training for the Community Fire Refuge.	CFA	Blackwood CEMP Council	December annually	Ongoing	To ensure compliance with designation of the CFR and to ensure community exercising and training occurs annually.

ACTION	LEAD	SUPPORT	DUE BY	COMPLETE	COMMENTS
Develop an information pack for tourism operators and businesses within the Blackwood area with an easily-identifiable Blackwood CEMP. Group packaging to promote the project.	BCEMP	Council Business Operators Tourism Operators	March 2017	Yet to commence	To assist in educating and communicating with visitors to the area.
Develop a map insert that identifies all trafficable routes throughout the Blackwood and forest area to assist visitors and locals in the event an emergency.	Blackwood CEMP	CFA Council VicPol	March 2017	Yet to commence	This map can be provided to locals and visitors to assist with information on traffic routes out of the area.
Work with tourist operators and accommodation providers to develop appropriate plans and information for staff, clients and guests.	Blackwood CEMP	CFA Council Business Operators Tourist Operators	March 2017	Yet to commence	Develop an accommodation manifest.
Invite the community to work with the Blackwood CEMP Group and participate in relevant scenarios, supporting people to test their plans and be better prepared to make decisions before, during and after emergencies.	Blackwood CEMP	EMV	March 2017	Planning Underway	A scenario based around the phoenix modelling process will assist community members to understand the impacts of fire on the area, and will assist with revisions and updates of the CEMP. Other scenarios around flooding, landslides and other risks can be developed and planned, including alert sirens and evacuation exercises.
Work with Emergency Management Victoria to support this CEMP to become live on the electronic mapping system (EMCop).	Blackwood CEMP	CFA EMV	December 2016	Planning underway	Similar to the electronic format for the Harrietville CEMP on the EMV website.
Work with agency staff to identify risk ratings for each property in the Blackwood	Blackwood CEMP	EMV	October 2017	Planning underway	This will provide awareness for community members on their individual risks and the Blackwood CEMP can work through options and mitigation opportunities. The BBKA risk rating app

ACTION	LEAD	SUPPORT	DUE BY	COMPLETE	COMMENTS
area to educate the community on their individual risks.					is to be tested in Blackwood.
Work with the Moorabool Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee on mutual priorities.	Blackwood CEMP / MSC	CFA / VicPol	Annual	Ongoing	
Work with VicRoads to ensure that the priority access and egress road for the Blackwood Community can remain open unless unsafe to do so.	Blackwood CEMP / MSC / CFA	VicRoads VicPol MSC	Annual	Ongoing	Ensure that this priority access road can remain open during times of emergencies with ongoing maintenance programs.
Work with the Moorabool Shire on a chipping/mulching day to be held in Blackwood prior to each fire season.	Blackwood CEMP / MSC	MSC CFA	Annual	Yet to commence	Annual chipping or hazardous vegetation removal day to assist with community fire preparation and planning.
Compile a register of less abled people who have special needs and may require assistance during an emergency or evacuation.	Blackwood CEMP / MSC	MSC SES CERT	Annual	Ongoing	Develop a standard response procedure to be activated during an emergency.
Prepare a map showing the locations of emergency management tracks, fuel breaks and water filling points in the forested area around the town.	Blackwood CEMP / DELWP	CFA MSC	March 2017	Yet to Commence	The map to be a pro-active tool to assist emergency services planning an emergency response and to assist with township protection. The risk associated in the safe use of some of these tracks may need to be evaluated; or a track access classification system identified.
Collectively work together with the BBCA, DELWP, EMV and MSC to minimise risk of bushfire on the public/freehold land interface to achieve optimum township protection.	EMV	Blackwood CEMP, DELWP BBCA MSC	Annual	Ongoing	Relies on the co-operation of all agencies to achieve the optimum outcome for township protection, bushfire recovery and long term survival of the town.

ACTION	LEAD	SUPPORT	DUE BY	COMPLETE	COMMENTS
Develop awareness campaign on 000 (emergency calls) for all other mobile services using the Telstra Tower	EMV	Blackwood CEMP MSC CERT	Dec 2016	Annual	Further information for the community is contained in the link: http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/calling-the-emergency-call-service-from-a-mobile-phone--faqs If you do not know your exact location, using the Emergency+ smartphone app to call Triple Zero (000) can assist. The app provides you with your GPS co-ordinates which you can tell the emergency call taker, allowing them to pinpoint your location. The Emergency+ app is available to download free of charge from the link: http://emergencyapp.triplezero.gov.au/
Investigate opportunities for a weather station to be installed within the Blackwood area.	Blackwood CEMP	EMV CFA MSC CERT	Dec 2017	Yet to commence	Ideally located at the CFR to provide emergency agencies and Emergency Control Centres with up to date weather information affecting the Blackwood area during a potential emergency.
Investigate opportunities for a study to be conducted by an educational facility in relation to local weather conditions.	Blackwood CEMP	DELWP CFA MSC CERT	Dec 2017	Yet to commence	Explore opportunities for installation of a temporary weather station in forested land around the town during an emergency to provide emergency agencies and Emergency Control Centres with up to date information.
Active CEMP members that find themselves in the Fire Refuge in an emergency should take on a lead role.	Blackwood CEMP / CFA	MSC EMV	Annual	Ongoing	Engage with people utilising the CFR and liaise with emergency agencies in supporting their safety.
Undertake an awareness campaign regarding rebuilding costs including adequate insurance cover, increased awareness of BAL ratings and rebuilding costs.	Blackwood CEMP	EMV BBCA MSC	30 June 2017	Ongoing	Based on the CSIRO report released into house loss in Wye River / Separation Creek and lessons learnt from the Scotsburn fire.
Create an awareness campaign of cars and kilowatts of generated heat causing fires on roadsides and grass verges.	Blackwood CEMP	CFA MSC	December 2017	Yet to commence	PACE (Primary, Alternative, Contingency & Emergency) plans to support and improve current information, increase people safety and manage risks towards assets/values (eg road, hall etc), systems (eg communication) for bushfire, flood, landslide and combined events.
Create an awareness campaign	Blackwood	CFA	December	Yet to commence	PACE (Primary, Alternative, Contingency & Emergency) plans to

ACTION	LEAD	SUPPORT	DUE BY	COMPLETE	COMMENTS
and undertake education for the community about radiant heat – an invisible threat – The Fire Guardian.	CEMP	MSC	2017		support and improve current information, increase people safety and manage risks towards assets/values (eg road, hall etc), systems (eg communication) for bushfire, flood, landslide and combined events.

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7. Supporting Information



Tailored Information for local and visitors

The following information and documents are being developed to support the local Blackwood community, including businesses and tourists to be better prepared before, during and after emergencies.

Each is available through the Blackwood CEMP Group as required.

This information may be used as part of a broader Blackwood CEMP Group Engagement and Communications Plan, allowing for timely distribution along with Blackwood CEMP group newsletters etc.

A more detailed communications plan to promote a safer and more resilient Blackwood for the future is identified in the table of actions and some further funds will be required to activate some of this plan.

It is envisaged that the following information will be managed and supported by a community-based website/portal in the future.

Information for local residents and visitors

- Letter (and templates) for local residents.
- Updated Blackwood Community Information Guide
- Local maps and aerial photos.

Information for local businesses

- Updated local Blackwood information for accommodation providers in Blackwood CEMP Group Information Folder

Operational documents

- Updated Community Plan that supports the CFA/Blackwood Local Response Plan
- An 'opt in' Local Blackwood email and sms (text) phone tree network
- Local Blackwood CEMP Group agency contact details.
- Blackwood CEMP Group operational guide to open and activate the Blackwood Community Fire Refuge

Further documents including bushfire, flood and landslide information will be made available when developed.

Nominated Representatives and Key Contacts

Blackwood CEMP Group

Brendan Hehir

Des Peters

Blackwood Fire Brigade

Ross Hall – Captain – 0413 997225

Blackwood CFA – 5368 6526

Agencies and Organisations

Moorabool Shire Council 5366 7100

Country Fire Authority (CFA) 5329 5500

District 15 Headquarters

DELWP 136 186

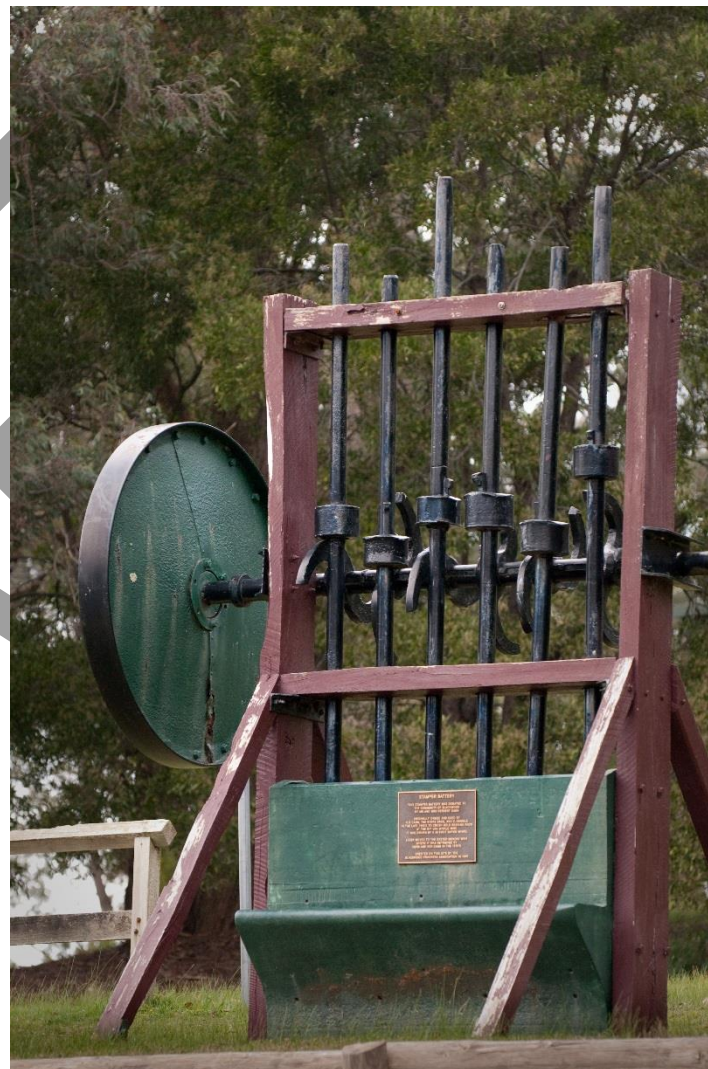
VicPol - Ballan 5368 1303

- Trentham 5424 1501

VicFire 1800 240667

ESTA – (Burn Off Notificiation) 1800 668511

SES 132500



Blackwood Community Profile

How many people live in Blackwood?

(from MSC Small Towns Strategy)

Population **200**

Dwellings **298**

How many people can visit and stay in Blackwood?

There is visitor accommodation and many absentee landowners in Blackwood so the population and fluctuate during the year.

Blackwood is a popular destination for connecting to outdoor adventure activities including bushwalking, hiking, fishing, mountain biking, trail bike riding and camping. Many people travel through Blackwood on their way to other destinations within Victoria.

Summer

Popular accommodation and camping destination for walking, hiking, four-wheel driving and motor bike riding and to just relax and enjoy the ambience.

Winter

Cold and wet and even has snow falling on occasions. Winter bush walks and hikes and trail bike riding is still a popular pastime.

Events

Blackwood has a number of events including the Easter Woodchop Carnival and the Music and Culture Festival in November. The Garden of St Erth also conducts a number of harvest festivals.

What services are provided to support the local and visitors

Information at Post Office and store.

Blackwood Fire Station

Nearest doctor – Ballan Community Health

Council provide health and aged care (HACC) services to local residents as required.

Blackwood Special School

Primary school and high school students travel out of town (car/bus)

Local businesses include Blackwood Hotel, Merchant Café, Garden of St Erth, Blackwood Ridge Nursery, Frogmore Nursery cafes, accommodation, bed and breakfasts and Mineral Springs Caravan Park.

Community Connections

The community is connected through a range of formal and informal community activities hosted by volunteer groups, sporting groups, Blackwood CEMP Group, Action Groups, Emergency Service Groups, Crown Reserve Committees of Management etc., others are also linked informally via local businesses including the general store and local hotel.

Other Characteristics

Limited Public Transport

Private bus trips arranged by Senior Citizen groups and Progress Associations.

Medical

No medical facilities.

Defibrillators (2 X Automated External Defibrillators – AED) are located in the local hotel and fire station).

What is important to the Blackwood community? Locally nominated community assets, values and support systems



What is important to the Blackwood community? Locally nominated community assets, values and support systems

ASSET/VALUE	SOCIAL VALUE	ECONOMIC VALUE	ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE	LOCAL VALUE	REGIONAL VALUE	STATE VALUE	NATIONAL VALUE
Blackwood Hotel	✓	✓		✓			
Garden of St Erth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Blackwood Specialist School	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Blackwood Hall	✓	✓		✓			
Recreation Reserve	✓	✓		✓			
Tourism							
Caravan Park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Mineral Springs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Frogmore Gardens	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Blackwood Ridge Nursery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Mobile Phone Tower		✓		✓	✓		
Local houses		✓		✓			
Water Supply		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Power Supply		✓		✓	✓		
Lerderderg Heritage River	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Shaws Lake	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Lerderderg State Park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Wombat State Forest	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wildlife Shelter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Walking Tracks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Downstream potable water supply	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

ASSET/VALUE	SOCIAL VALUE	ECONOMIC VALUE	ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE	LOCAL VALUE	REGIONAL VALUE	STATE VALUE	NATIONAL VALUE
4WD Recreation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Historic Sites	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Bed and Breakfast Accommodation	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Community Events	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
2 Churches	✓	✓		✓			
Cemetery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Museum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

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What are the priority natural hazards and risks?

The priority natural hazards for Blackwood are currently identified as

- Bushfire
- Local flood, and
- Landslides

Key Issues and vulnerabilities

'Safer Together' is the Victorian Government's new direction and will focus on working closer with communities in high bushfire risk areas. As the program unfolds, it is expected to involve local communities in decision making about bushfire management and share hazard data and risk modelling tools for communities to assess their own bushfire risk to develop strategies for action.

Blackwood is totally surrounded by forested public land. The key to resolving the fire issues in Blackwood will depend on the ability for all of the stakeholders to work together and collaboratively develop and achieve mutual goals and solutions. This will include all relevant land managers, utility providers, emergency management organisations, BBKA, businesses and the broader community.

Fuel breaks have been widened or new fuel breaks created on public land as part of the

Dandenong Ranges Bushfire Landscape pilot project as recommended by the Bushfire Royal Commission. The CSIRO report into house loss at Wye River / Separation Creek recommends a distinct border between forest and residential areas.

These fuel breaks can be used to help control bushfires and provide control lines for planned burning. They also serve as a buffer between vegetation on public land and nearby houses. Construction of fuel breaks generally involves leaving the trees, but removing weeds and mowing or mulching the understorey along the boundary of the public land. Similar fuel break works have been undertaken in the Great Otway National Park to protect high risk coastal communities.

Locals are concerned where their block adjoins public land as the management of vegetation, weeds and fuel on the public land will influence fire risk on their property. Prescribed burning is one tool to reduce this risk, but the fire risk gradually returns as fuels build up over subsequent years. Surface and near surface fine fuels such as grasses and weeds adjoining freehold properties needs to be managed at least on an annual basis through additional methods such as mowing or mulching to reduce fire risk. This annual maintenance would create a fuel break

between properties with dwellings and the bushfire fuel hazard.

DELWP are planning fuel breaks along the private / public land interface in strategic areas around Blackwood as outlined in their current Fire Operations Plan. This also includes hazard reduction removal treatment of various blocks of Crown land through the town.

Moorabool Shire Council are managing hazard reduction on local government roads around Blackwood.

Managing the risk on freehold land in accordance with the 10/30 rule, 10/50 rule and fence line clearing planning exemptions in Victoria: enable residents to clear and remove vegetation to reduce bushfire hazard without the need for a planning permit. The 10/50 rule applies to areas within the Bushfire Management Overlay like Blackwood and allows landowners to clear any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of their house; and clear any vegetation, except for trees, within 50 metres of their house. This is reduced to 30 metres in areas outside the Bushfire Management Overlay. Landowners can also clear any vegetation for a combined maximum width of 4 metres across existing boundary fences.

A factsheet about 'Frequently asked questions' on these planning exemptions: http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/221308/1030-Rule,-1050-Rule-and-fence-line-clearing-factsheet-Frequently-Asked-Questions-.pdf provides further information and helps to clarify their application. The planning exemptions apply in Moorabool Shire irrespective of any planning overlays. The written consent of the land owner is required to clear vegetation on adjoining land. Consent of the relevant public authority or land manager is required in the case of clearing vegetation on adjoining roadsides or public land. If there is at least 4 metres of cleared land on one side of the fence, vegetation cannot be removed on the other side of the fence without a planning permit. It is interesting to note the 10/50 (and 10/30) rule exemption does not apply to the building of new homes, as there is an expectation that new buildings will be sited away from the bushfire hazard where native vegetation removal can be avoided and minimised.

The application of the 10/50 rule in the case of rebuilding following bushfire needs to be clarified.

Meeting the requirements of having sufficient defensible space for township protection to

successfully minimise bushfire risk and enable rebuilding presents a challenge, particularly on blocks that adjoin forested public land. Compatible management of land adjoining the town to minimise bushfire risk for optimum fire protection requires a cooperative approach between management agencies. DELWP have recently released their 'Community Charter' which aims to work with communities to deliver services that support liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities and thriving natural environments.

Radiant Heat – an invisible threat

Intense fires produce a lot of heat. This radiant heat travels in straight lines, radiating in all directions from the source.

Radiant heat can be dangerous for you and your property and causes more deaths in a fire than direct flames. Sustained radiant heat at high intensity can have an impact even at distance. For example, it can ignite combustible materials around the home.

You can minimise the impact of radiant heat. Solid objects, such as buildings or concrete

tanks will block radiant heat, and clothing or blankets made of natural fibres such as wool or cotton can help protect your skin from limited, lower levels of radiant heat. Synthetic fibres won't offer the same protection because they can melt and cause serious injury. Even when you wear protective clothing, radiant heat puts you at high risk of heat-related illness. When heat illness progresses to heat stroke, you can die unless you are treated and cooled very quickly. If you have an existing condition that makes you more vulnerable to heat, the risk of death is even greater. When working in conditions where you're exposed to radiant heat, dehydration can occur very quickly so it's extremely important to maintain your fluids. Reducing fuel loads near your home can help it survive a fire, even if you plan to leave early. The longer your home is exposed to heat, the higher the chance it will ignite. For example, if shrubs or plants underneath your windows catch fire, they will expose the glass to prolonged heat, which can cause the window to break. When the window breaks, ember can enter, and it won't be long before any flammable materials, such as curtains or beds are alight.



Other discussion points/potential actions to be considered in support of achieving the short, medium and long term goals.

Short term goals to be 'safer' (1-2 years)

- Support locals and visitors to understand priority hazards and risks; and contribute towards developing solutions by participating in local activities. Assess if visitors feel safer as the town becomes safer.
- Work with the local community organisations to complete each item in a 'safer and more resilient Blackwood checklist' (to be developed)
- Support agencies and organisations to improve their maintenance/programs to ensure that Blackwood is well prepared and connected 'before, during and after' emergencies.
- Seek formal feedback from local community and broader stakeholders to continually improve
- Annually review the plan by Blackwood CEMP Group/Moorabool Shire Council/Blackwood Fire Brigade and other groups and organisations.

Medium term goals to adapt (1-5 years)

- Work with Moorabool Shire Council and the Regional CFA to undertake an annual

exercise/training regarding the use and activation of the Blackwood Community Fire Refuge, including alert siren testing and evacuation exercises.

- Engage with local businesses to:
 - Support the development and ongoing maintenance of emergency and business continuity plans
 - Consider a benchmarking/program for businesses to ensure that obligations are met and used as a positive drawcard for the town. This may become a community level 'team effort' and provide Blackwood and the region with a major business advantage.
 - Consider a broader project with other communities and the Macedon Ranges Spa Country Tourism Body.

Long term goals to develop a safer, more resilient and preferred future (1-10+ years)

- Work with the Moorabool Shire Council to integrate the implementation of this Blackwood CEMP into the broader Blackwood 2041 township planning.

A photograph of a rocky stream with moss-covered rocks and water flowing over them. The text "Building local community resilience" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

**Building local
community
resilience**