



***HEPBURN SHIRE COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL***

***TUESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2010, 6PM
DAYLESFORD SENIOR CITIZENS
VINCENT STREET
DAYLESFORD***

DRAFT MINUTES

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Hepburn Shire Council Special Meeting



DRAFT MINUTES

TUESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2010

Daylesford Senior Citizens

Vincent St, Daylesford

Commencing 6pm

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Conrick', is positioned above the printed name.

KAYLENE CONRICK
Chief Executive Officer
19 November 2010

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS:

We would like to acknowledge we are meeting on Jaara people country, of which members and elders of the Dja Dja Wurrung community and their forebears have been custodians for many centuries.

On this land the Jaara people have performed age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

We acknowledge their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region.

2. OPENING OF MEETING:

PRESENT: Mayor Janine Booth, Deputy Mayor Rod May, Birch Ward Councillor Jon Barrell, Cameron Ward Councillor Tim Hayes, Coliban Ward Councillor Sebastian Klein, Creswick Ward Councillor Don Henderson, Holcombe Ward Councillor Bill McClenaghan

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive Officer Kaylene Conrick, General Manager Sustainable Development Robert Jennings

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

“WE THE COUNCILLORS OF HEPBURN SHIRE
DECLARE THAT WE WILL UNDERTAKE ON EVERY OCCASION
TO CARRY OUT OUR DUTIES IN THE BEST INTERESTS
OF THE COMMUNITY
AND THAT OUR CONDUCT SHALL MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS
OF THE CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE
SO THAT WE MAY FAITHFULLY REPRESENT
AND UPHOLD THE TRUST PLACED IN THIS COUNCIL BY THE
PEOPLE OF HEPBURN SHIRE”

3. APOLOGIES: Nil.

4. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: Nil.

5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

5.1 CODE RED DAY ARRANGEMENTS

GENERAL MANAGER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In providing this advice to Council as the General Manager Sustainable Development, I have no interests to disclose in this report.

Note: This report last updated on Tuesday 23-11-2010

PURPOSE

To review Council's Code Red Day closure procedure and to present the recommendation for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND

On 15 December 2009 the Council adopted a Code Red Policy consistent with Victorian State Government Policy. The Code Red Policy outlines the organisational response to days declared Code Red Fire Danger Rating Days by Bureau of Meteorology (BoM).

The Policy suspends services and closes facilities in towns and surrounding districts of Trentham, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs, Creswick on Code Red Fire Danger Rating Days for reasons of staff, contractor and community safety. All aged and disability services will be suspended beyond these towns to all clients across the Shire.

In adopting this Policy in December 2009 Council also resolve to revisit the policy post the 2009/10 bushfire season. The policy review also awaited the final Bushfire Royal Commission Report handed down on 31 July 2010.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Generally

The 2009/2010 Bushfire season did not result in a Code Red day declared for the Central Fireband District. Therefore Council has not to date "tested" this Policy. However, the obligation of Council as an employer to provide a safe work place to employees on declared Code Red Fire Danger rating days remains.

Victoria has adopted the nationally agreed Fire Danger Rating scale to help communities understand information about fire danger. This scale recognises the

significant increase in severe bushfire conditions over the past decade and the subsequent greater level of danger to the community, as experienced on Black Saturday, 7 February 2009. A Fire Danger Rating is a prediction of fire behaviour, including how hard it would be to put out a fire once it starts.

Due to increasing risk and impact of bush fires it is essential Council has clear plans to protect both its staff and our community.

Every day during the fire season the BoM forecasts an outlook of the fire danger index (FDI) by considering elements of the predicted weather including temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and dryness of vegetation. When determining the Fire Danger Rating, fire agencies, in consultation with the BoM, consider a range of other factors relating to that area and day.

These factors include:

- The length of time the fire danger index has been elevated
- Extent of fire already in the landscape
- Fuel and dryness
- Likelihood of weather events such as lightning and grass fuel conditions.

Of particular concern are the four designated high fire risk towns in the shire. To ensure the safety of staff and the community and in keeping with State Government policy and Council's obligation to provide a safe working environment for staff, it is recommended that on all Code Red Fire Danger Rating days from 12 midnight to 12 midnight all services and facilities not operate in the high fire risk towns; Daylesford, Trentham, Hepburn Springs and Creswick.

Importantly, staff involved in Emergency Management will undertake their roles and responsibilities in accordance with Emergency Management procedures. Further details on these activities are produced later in the report.

State Government Policy

The Council Policy is in line with State Government policy from the Department of Education and the Central Highlands Library Corporation.

For the 2010 bushfire season, schools, kindergartens and child care facilities determined by the Department of Education to be at high-risk of fire danger were placed on a Bushfire At-Risk Register.

Inclusion on this register was a trigger for the school, kindergarten or child care facility to close on days declared by fire authorities as being Code Red.

The process of determining which schools, kindergartens and child care facilities are included on the register involves the facilities themselves, the Department's Regional Offices, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, the Independent Schools Association of Victoria, the Municipal Association of Victoria and information from fire and emergency services.

The following Department of Education facilities (identified on their website at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/register.htm>) will be closed within Hepburn Shire on Code Red days as of 8 October 2010:

BULLARTO	Bullarto Primary School	131 South Bullarto Road
CRESWICK	Creswick & District Preschool	24 Victoria Street
CRESWICK	Creswick Learning Centre	7 Victoria Street
CRESWICK	Creswick North Primary School	Mac Street
CRESWICK	Creswick Primary School	Napier Street
CRESWICK	St Augustine's School (Creswick)	Napier Street
DAYLESFORD	Daylesford Dharma School	11 Perrins Street
DAYLESFORD	Daylesford Kindergarten	81 West Street
DAYLESFORD	Daylesford Preschool	20 Central Springs Road
DAYLESFORD	Daylesford Primary School (including Drummond and Yandoit annexes)	102-128 Vincent Street
DAYLESFORD	Daylesford Secondary College	39 Smith Street
DAYLESFORD	St Michael's School (Daylesford)	Smith Street
HEPBURN	Hepburn Primary School	Main Road
HEPBURN SPRINGS	Hepburn Kindergarten	2 Golf Links Road
TRENTHAM	Trentham District Primary School	Bridge Street
TRENTHAM	Trentham Kindergarten	23 Bridge Street

The Central Highlands Library Corporation has similarly determined to close the libraries in the four high risk fire townships on days declared Code Red Fire Danger Rating as part of their extreme weather policy. Specifically, libraries in Daylesford, Creswick, Clunes and Trentham under a Code Red rating will not open until the risk is lowered.

Other Municipalities

The current arrangements (refer to Procedure issued under separate cover) are generally in line with that of other surrounding municipalities regarding services and staffing arrangements in areas located in the 52 high risk towns.

Moorabool Shire Council

The Council has a policy where on Code Red days, staff, contractors, councillors and volunteers will not be permitted to either work in or travel to or through declared Fire Prone areas and all Council owned facilities in the declared Fire Prone areas will be closed to the public.

Council offices remain open in Ballan and Bacchus Marsh (neither town is declared among the 52 high fire risk towns.)

Macedon Ranges

Closes all facilities and work places in areas included in the 52 high fire risk towns, which include Macedon and Woodend.

Offices remain open in Kyneton and Gisborne. These towns are not among the 52 high risk towns.

Mt Alexander

The township of Castlemaine is declared among the 52 high fire risk towns. The Council does not close its offices (both of the Council's Offices are located in Castlemaine) on Code Red Days. The Council is planning to review its Code Red Day arrangements before the fire season.

MEMPC Motion

In addition, Council's *Code Red* Day procedure was raised at the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee meeting on 3 November 2010. The following motion was carried.¹

¹ The words "In response MEMPC Chair Cr Bill McClenaghan proposed"

Motion: *That Council review its Code Red Day arrangements with a view to Council conducting business as normal on Code Red Days.*

Moved: Andrew Guiney (Vic Pol)

Seconded: Alfred Mason (CFA)

Discussion at the Meeting highlighted community concern regarding the perception of “deserting” the community if the Council Offices close for Code Red days.

This perception appears to exist despite all Hepburn Shire Council Emergency Management Staff being on standby on Code Red days ready to respond should an incident occur and the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) being on standby.

A subsequent meeting was held on 22 November 2010 between Police and Hepburn Shire Council. On behalf of the Police, Sergeant Guiney has indicated satisfaction with the current policy as the appropriate process based on the alignment with State Government policy and on the basis that the MECC will be able to be staffed and operational during an event.

The Code Red Fire Warning Policy has been amended from the original 2009-2010 policy to make clear that the emergency management staff are to be stationed in the MECC in readiness for any incidents.

Meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee

At a meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee on 22 November 2010, the Code Red Day arrangements were included on the agenda. Whilst the committee indicated that the policy itself was not an item they could consider, they endorsed their satisfaction, with respect to risk to Council, that due process had been followed by officers in making a recommendation to Council.

What Happens leading up to and on a Code Red Day

Previous to the Code Red Day, communication messages will have been out to the community at the beginning of the fire season through the Advocate Page, media releases, website updates and mail outs to non-resident ratepayers through a Department of Justice program in late November 2010.

On the Code Red Day itself, Hepburn Shire Council will go into an Emergency Mode of Business. In Emergency Mode, Council will be able to deliver their

emergency services should they be required as well as take calls from community members whilst on standby status.

All emergency staff will be previously alerted to the situation will go in early to set up the MECC and be on standby in readiness for any incidents.

At the same time within the CFA on Code Red Days, the Incident Control Centre will be pre-formed with a team of 30 people in Sebastapol and Horsham and the District Coordination Centre in Wendouree will have around six people on standby. A rostered MECC liaison officer will also be on standby.

COUNCIL PLAN /LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

Council Plan 2009-2013:

4. Ensuring that the Hepburn Shire Council is an employer of choice, offering a safe and equitable workplace, also ensuring that employees are offered opportunities for professional growth.
49. Involving communities in emergency response preparedness and ensuring our response plans are sufficiently robust to deal with not only the familiar emergencies like bushfire but possible emergency crises like fuel shortages or widespread financial distress.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are financial implications when staff members are instructed not to attend the workplace, business ceases to operate and services are disrupted. The cost is variable depending on the number of Code Red Days declared each year.

Whilst it is acknowledged that business continuity arrangements may be able to be put in place for some staff, such as operating from home via laptops and mobile broadband, there will be other staff where this is not possible. As an organisation all staff will be paid if they work at Council facilities or normally operate in one of the four high fire risk townships and due to the declaration of a Code Red day and Council's closure policy are unable to attend work.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

Risks to be considered include:

- Withdrawal of services to the community.
- Requiring staff to attend the workplace on a *Code Red* during a fire incident.

The following training has been or will shortly be provided to Hepburn Shire Council staff in preparation for Code Red Day events:

- Key MECC staff have been trained through:
 - Courses like *Introduction to Emergency Management* offered by the State Emergency Service (SES) and other relevant courses
 - Actual events like the recent floods and previous fires
 - MECC simulation drills with adjoining shires.
- On-ground staff that may be required by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) for operating excavators and other machinery will be trained by the CFA Fiskville Division. This training is booked in for 7 December 2010.

New staff will undergo training as they are introduced into the emergency management role.

ENVIRONMENTAL/SOCIAL/ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

There may be social and economic implications through the disruption of Council business and impacts on the local community and businesses.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Council's Communications Plan – Code Red Days will be communicated to the general public as part of media releases and advertisements (print media and website).

Emergency staff will also be able take calls from community members whilst on standby status.

CONCLUSION

Council continues to have a responsibility as an employer to provide a safe working place to employees on declared Code Red Fire Danger rating days.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 5.1.1 Adopt the amended Code Red Fire Danger Procedure – Emergency Mode of Operation*
- 5.1.2 On Code Red Fire Danger Rating Days, activate an Emergency Mode of operation, where any non-emergency management services will be suspended and any non-emergency facilities in Trentham, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs and Creswick will be closed.*
- 5.1.3 Formally notify Section 86 Committees of Management and Contractors of Council's policy direction for Code Red Days.*
- 5.1.4 Write to inform lessees of Council facilities in these towns that they should develop procedures in line with CFA recommended action on Code Red Fire Danger Rating days*

MOTION

That Council:

- 5.1.1 Adopt the amended Code Red Fire Danger Procedure – Emergency Mode of Operation*
- 5.1.2 On Code Red Fire Danger Rating Days, activate an Emergency Mode of operation, where any non-emergency management services will be suspended and any non-emergency facilities in Trentham, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs and Creswick will be closed.*
- 5.1.3 Formally notify Section 86 Committees of Management and Contractors of Council's policy direction for Code Red Days.*
- 5.1.4 Write to inform lessees of Council facilities in these towns that they should develop procedures in line with CFA recommended action on Code Red Fire Danger Rating days*

Moved: Councillor Sebastian Klein

Seconded: Councillor Jon Barrell

Carried.

6. CLOSE OF MEETING.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.