TOWARDS A MORE DISASTER RESILIENT AND SAFER VICTORIA

THE SALVATION ARMY RESPONSE

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The Salvation Army, Australia Southern Territory – Victorian State Council: Towards a more disaster resilient and safer Victoria

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INTRODUCTION:
In Australia, The Salvation Army has a long history of emergency response, having been actively involved in a number of emergencies, including the 2003 Canberra bushfires, the 2006 Port Lincoln bushfires, 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, and recent floods across Australia, to name a few.

The Salvation Army’s mission is based on the principles of offering human dignity, justice, hope, compassion and community to vulnerable members of the community. As such, The Salvation Army’s daily work focuses on providing holistic care that addresses an individual’s physical, emotional and mental needs. In the context of emergency relief and recovery, this holistic approach to care revolves around the belief that community recovery and resilience are only achieved when all aspects of a community are healthy and able to assist each other.

Emergencies affect all people and all parts of a person. It is therefore necessary to take a whole-of-community and whole-of-person approach to service provision during relief and recovery responses which address not only the immediate material loss and needs following an emergency, but takes into consideration individuals’ mental health, ability to grieve, and capacity to interact and participate in their community as it begins to rebuild. Providing a service which is able to address all of these needs takes time, but it is only by addressing the needs of a whole person and a whole community that successful recovery and community resilience will be achieved.

GREEN PAPER AND DIRECTION OF SUBMISSION:
The Victorian Government’s Green Paper on emergency management Towards a more disaster resilient and safer Victoria is welcomed, as it is essential to learn from the successes and failures of the past in order to better prepare Victoria for future emergencies.

The Salvation Army agrees with the Green Paper’s premise that “all emergencies create similar problems and that many of the measures required to deal with emergencies are generic, such as early warning, evacuation, medical services, and community recovery.” The Salvation Army also supports the “all hazards, all agencies” approach to emergency management and agrees that achieving “community resilience” should be the end goal and outcome of a well planned, coordinated, and implemented emergency management response.

However, The Salvation Army is deeply disappointed that the Green Paper has failed to adequately discuss the role of not for profit (NFP) and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in emergency management. The principle of “all hazards, all agencies” advocates for a unified, cohesive, and complete emergency response which breaks down silos between organisations. By failing to recognise the important work NGOs can do and the immense level of resources they can provide to emergency relief and recovery responses, significant capacity to ensure communities are responded to in a holistic way is lost. The Salvation Army therefore strongly advocates for the Victoria Government to reconsider the
role of community organisations and service agencies and to put in place governance structures which encourage creative collaboration between NGOs, NFPs and Government.

The principle of “community resilience” as outlined in the Green Paper is “the sustained ability of a community to withstand and recover from adversity.” The Salvation Army suggests that while a community’s ability to withstand an emergency is partly dependent on preparedness, preparedness will not always ensure a community’s safety, as was demonstrated by the Black Saturday bushfires. It is The Salvation Army’s view that rather, a community’s ability to withstand, and more importantly recover, from an emergency is also highly dependent on the quality and timeliness of the initial response to the emergency.

Given The Salvation Army’s long history of emergency relief and recovery responses, The Salvation Army will focus on these two aspects of emergency management and argues that a community’s long term recovery will only be as good as the initial response to an emergency. As such, in addition to the emphasis placed on preparedness in the Green Paper, the need to ensure a timely, holistic, and coordinated initial response in the first hours and days after an emergency is paramount to ensuring affected communities are put on a path towards recovery as quickly as possible. A quality emergency relief response needs to be seamlessly followed up by a long term recovery response which is able to continue to meet the needs of affected individuals and communities throughout the time it takes communities to rebuild and return to a state of “community resilience.”

Based on previous experience with emergency relief and recovery, most notably the experiences gained from working during the Black Saturday bushfires and the 2011 floods, The Salvation Army has identified several components of relief and recovery that the organisation believes make relief and recovery responses more effective for communities:

- a quality emergency relief response;
- community embedded services;
- consistency in communication; and
- long term recovery and outreach programs.

It is The Salvation Army’s experience that the above components enabled the organisation to provide quality services to affected communities through the initial relief and long term recovery stages of the responses to Black Saturday and the 2011 floods (Appendix A). The Salvation Army feels strongly that without these four components, the organisation’s efforts to help the devastated communities, particularly those impacted by Black Saturday, rebuild their lives would not have succeeded. As a result, The Salvation Army suggests that the above components could be replicated in other similar organisations’ emergency response practices and recommends that the Victorian Government incorporate these components into the state-wide emergency management framework.

This paper is dedicated to exploring how and why these components worked for The Salvation Army and how they may be able to be incorporated into other agencies and a state-wide emergency management framework. It is The
Salvation Army’s hope that by exploring how these principles were worked into the fabric of the organisation’s responses, and how they were applied to communities, that the Government will be able to embed these principles into its own emergency relief and recovery responses.

Finally, in relation to governance and management, The Salvation Army comments on several options put forward by the Green Paper which are considered to have an impact on the ability of Governments, Emergency Service Organisations (ESOs) and NGOs to work collaboratively and creatively together.

1. EMERGENCY RELIEF:

A community’s ability to recover after an emergency is integrally linked to the quality of the initial emergency relief provided to that community, as a response which meets the need for food, clothing, financial assistance, and emotional support contributes to an individual’s ability to start a path towards recovery.

The primary role of The Salvation Army, as identified in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV), at the time of the bushfires was the management of material aid and meals for emergency services personnel, as well as offering personnel emotional support. However, because of the tremendous need on the day and several weeks following Black Saturday, and the incredible response from community and corporate donors, The Salvation Army was in a position to respond beyond the limitations and expectations of the EMMV and became involved in many aspects of relief work.

There are several aspects of The Salvation Army’s emergency relief response which the organisation considers vital to successfully meeting the needs of those affected. In some cases these aspects were managed well and represent best practice. In other cases, important lessons were learned. The Salvation Army highlights the aspects of its emergency relief response which went well, and offers several recommendations on how future responses can be improved in relation to:

- rapid response;
- chaplaincy;
- material aid management and distribution; and
- volunteer management.

1.1 Rapid Response

The Salvation Army’s role in the EMMV resulted in The Salvation Army being called to the Black Saturday bushfires almost as soon as the ESOs were. The Salvation Army has a unique relationship with ESOs not only through The Salvation Army’s role in providing food and material support to emergency personnel, but also through the role of Salvation Army chaplains who regularly sit with personnel during shift breaks to offer them a chance to unofficially “debrief.” Because Salvation Army chaplains traditionally have been at the site of an emergency with emergency personnel, Salvation Army chaplains were on the ground on Black Saturday well before the majority of other service agencies could respond. Naturally, given the level of the emergency and the tremendous impact
the fires had on the communities, chaplains originally intended to debrief fire
fighters and other emergency services personnel, counselled and talked with
bushfire survivors.

Due to The Salvation Army’s role in the EMMV, The Salvation Army became
aware of the size and severity of the Black Saturday bushfires before many other
services and quickly mobilised staff to attend the scene and provide assistance.
By Sunday, The Salvation Army had over 200 chaplains and staff on the ground
across bushfire affected communities and hundreds of volunteers on the ground
in the weeks immediately following.

The immediate response to the 2009 bushfires was possible for several reasons.
First, The Salvation Army’s unique hierarchical structure outlines a clear chain of
command from the top of the organisation to staff on the ground and enabled The
Salvation Army to quickly mobilise staff, chaplains and volunteers. The breadth
of Salvation Army services provided the organisation with a large number of staff
in close proximity to the affected areas which could be mobilised to attend the
scene of the fires. These staff were all highly skilled and had significant
experience in social work, case management and service delivery, enabling them
to quickly understand and respond to needs in the community. Finally, Salvation
Army chaplains are on call 24/7, which meant that, although the bushfires started
on a weekend, chaplains were easy to contact and mobilise.

The Salvation Army feels that the need for a rapid emergency relief response is
great given the inherent link between emergency relief and recovery. While The
Salvation Army’s ability to quickly respond to the Black Saturday bushfires is
largely a result of the organisation’s role in the EMMV, The Salvation Army feels
that a number of other organisations could have had a similar capacity to respond
rapidly had they known of the severity of the bushfires sooner. Therefore it is
recommended, that the Victorian Government identify other NGOs with similar
capacities to respond immediately and ensure they have the same access to
information on emergency situations in order to enable them to respond with the
same timeliness as that of The Salvation Army.

1.2 Chaplaincy

Chaplains provided a unique and essential role during the Black Saturday
bushfires. The Salvation Army, the Victorian Council of Churches, and a number
of other religious faiths and organisations all had a significant presence during the
initial relief response. However, due to The Salvation Army chaplains’ relationship
with ESOs and their early presence on the ground, people have many stories of a
Salvation Army chaplain being the first person they saw after fleeing their homes
and escaping the bushfires.

Salvation Army chaplains performed a variety of functions during the bushfires
including assisting the Red Cross in notifying people of the loss of their loved
ones, knocking on doors, and assisting survivors to navigate the service system.
Most notably, however, was chaplains’ unique function to simply be available for
people to talk to.
Chaplains made themselves available in community gathering places and did not probe people to tell their stories. Bushfire survivors often did not seek support in official settings and, having already suffered significant trauma, did not want to repeatedly tell their story. Instead, chaplains were able to casually engage with people to let them talk as they wanted. As a result, Salvation Army chaplains have a plethora of stories from impromptu conversations with survivors which often helped survivors begin to process what had happened and start the road to healing and recovery.

“There was also a lot of media around the material aide and service centres so people were trying their best to get in and get out and then would break down further away when no one was around. It was important for me to be there when that happened in case they needed someone around.”
~ Salvation Army Chaplain

“Caravans had been set up in the Whittlesea showgrounds for a music concert and were being used to house bushfire survivors. It was chaos. It was 1:00, 2:00, 3:00 in the morning and people were still wandering around, crying, in shock. I walked through the caravan parks most of the night so people could come up to talk to me while they were out and about.”
~ Salvation Army Chaplain

The value of chaplains cannot be underestimated. The immediate response of the chaplains and the initial support they were able to provide communities created a foundation of trust and respect for the organisation, and all those affiliated, which lasted throughout the relief response and has continued throughout the long term recovery response. It is important to note that Salvation Army chaplains still have a significant presence in the bushfire affected areas and still regularly meet with survivors. The significant amount of trust communities have placed in The Salvation Army as a result of this lasting commitment has positively impacted the organisation’s ability to work with affected communities throughout the re-building and recovery process.

1.3 Material Aid
The Salvation Army provided a pragmatic response to individuals, families and communities in the aftermath of the fires on Black Saturday, providing support, material aid, financial assistance and the provision of meals to emergency services personnel.

During the initial response to the Black Saturday bushfires, The Salvation Army provided in excess of 40,000 meals to emergency services personnel, volunteers and community members across bushfire affected communities. During the 2011 floods, The Salvation Army also provided food, material aid, and financial assistance to emergency services personnel and flood survivors across northern Victoria for up to two weeks after the floods.
At the height of the Black Saturday emergency relief response, The Salvation Army was involved in 22 relief centres across the state and managed several including at Traralgon, Seymour, Bendigo, Healesville, Broadford and Whittlesea. It is estimated that more than 10,000 people received immediate cash grants during the initial relief response and that approximately $27 million worth of material aid has been donated and distributed through these relief centres since Black Saturday.

In the days immediately following Black Saturday donated goods began arriving en mass. In Whittlesea, local communities and numerous aid organisations set up several relief centres at a variety of locations including the local showgrounds and Whittlesea tennis courts. However, the huge influx of donations soon created logistical challenges and quickly became unmanageable. As the lead provider of material aid, The Salvation Army was asked to take over the management of a significant portion of material aid donations. This led to The Salvation Army leasing a warehouse at Laurel Street to better manage the intake, storage, and distribution of material aid.

Whilst material aid is essential to any emergency relief response, a number of lessons were learned from Black Saturday which highlight the need for improved communication to the public about what is needed and better organisational procedures to be developed to facilitate the efficient intake and timely distribution of donations.

The Salvation Army’s experience with material aid during Black Saturday is defined by large donations of goods arriving at the relief centres spontaneously. Local relief centres did not have capacity to store the entirety of donations and volunteers spent a significant amount of time trying to find storage space. Space was often found in the city and outer metropolitan suburbs, creating further logistical issues when goods became needed on the ground and had to be transported back to local relief centres. In total, the Attorney-General’s Department estimates that $8 million was spent, and more than 1,500 were volunteers required, to administer and distribute material aid donations across the state during Black Saturday.1

In addition, a large amount of material aid donations were not appropriate for the immediate relief response. While some of the donations such as boots were needed immediately, significant amounts of material aid such as fridges were not required during the initial relief response. Even several months after the fires, many donations such as kitchen appliances were not needed as communities were still struggling to rebuild.

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Based on The Salvation Army’s experience with material aid and the organisation’s involvement with the Federal Working Group for the Management of Donated Goods, the organisation supports the recommendations made to the Attorney-General’s Department in the National Guidelines for Managing Donated Goods\(^2\) and suggests that cash donations are more useful and easier to manage, as it allows recipients to buy items they need, when they need them.

In addition, The Salvation Army recommends that the Victorian Government adopt, in accordance with the National Guidelines for Managing Donated Goods, an information campaign directed at the public, and delivered through mainstream media, which highlights the logistical challenges associated with in-kind donations and promotes cash over in-kind donations.

The Salvation Army recognises that a certain number of in-kind donations will always be given. As a result, The Salvation Army also recommends that an information campaign be developed to educate the public on what types of goods are most commonly needed during and immediately following an emergency. In conjunction with this information campaign, The Salvation Army recommends the Government develop systems and processes that identify a central location where donations can be brought which has the capacity to manage the intake process, store large amounts of donations for the medium to long term, and facilitate the transportation of goods to local relief centres when centres ask for them.

The Salvation Army would also like to note the importance of continuing to operate relief centres throughout the long term recovery process. The relief centre at Laurel Street was opened on the third day after Black Saturday and is still operating 32 months later. The physical building has become more than just a relief centre; it has become a place where people can meet with their neighbours, speak with chaplains, be referred to additional services, and collaborate with each other as they move towards long term recovery and rebuilding their lives. In some cases, people who will not seek help from any other service will still come to the relief centre. This creates a unique space in which staff can connect with individuals who have remained outside the service system.

“One night a guy came into the relief centre with his wife around closing time when there were not many people there. His wife wandered off and I started to talk to him. Without any prompting he started to share his story. When he left to go to his car, his wife popped back in to say thank you and how happy she was he had been able to finally tell someone about what had happened. Until then he had not been able to tell his story to anyone.”
~ Salvation Army Chaplain

Finally, while material aid donations arrive en mass in the immediate days and weeks following an emergency, there is significant material need in communities for months and years after the event. It is important that government policy reflects the need for a continued presence to be kept in communities and for assistance to be provided over a long period of time which can meet the needs of survivors as the needs present. Promoting cash over in-kind donations, developing long-term storage capacity for in-kind donations, and ensuring centres like Laurel Street are kept open as access points for the community, are all ways to meet the material needs of communities throughout their road to recovery.

1.4 Volunteers

The Salvation Army feels strongly that the Green Paper has overlooked the importance of volunteers, particularly non-CFA volunteers. Volunteers play a valuable role in the relief and recovery response of any emergency. In the case of Black Saturday, The Salvation Army managed several hundred volunteers across the state. Without the incredible commitment from volunteers, many of whom volunteered while maintaining full time jobs, the level to which The Salvation Army and other agencies were able to respond to those in need would not have been possible.

There were a number of learning’s from Black Saturday regarding volunteer management which should be used to improve volunteer management for the future. First, there was a large number of “spontaneous volunteers” who showed up in the days immediately following Black Saturday. Whilst these volunteers made an enormous contribution to the relief response, they also placed a significant administrative burden on The Salvation Army and other organisations. Volunteers came from a variety of backgrounds and some had no experience in emergency relief or how to assist trauma affected individuals. In the interest of ensuring volunteer safety and appropriately responding to those in need, it was necessary to assess each volunteer’s capacity to attend to severely traumatised individuals or to perform physically demanding work. These assessments required significant time and resources on the part of agencies. The Salvation Army was able to partner with other community agencies such as Whittlesea Community Connections, which had a database of community volunteers already in place, to enhance volunteer management and coordination. However, the management process remained ad hoc and could be improved.

Second, The Salvation Army’s experience during Black Saturday suggests that the majority of volunteers had pre-existing employment and usually could not sustain more than several weeks of full time volunteer work following an emergency. After these first few weeks, significant volunteer capacity was lost. It is important to fully utilise volunteers’ capacity during these first few weeks and then ensure that sufficient supports are kept in place to assist communities after the initial wave of volunteers return to work.

The Salvation Army also experienced a number of individuals from within affected communities wishing to volunteer. Supporting volunteers from within the affected communities can give survivors a purpose and a way to help their neighbours and friends, as well as identify potential leaders from within the community who may
have the capacity to take a lead in longer term community recovery. However, The Salvation Army’s experience suggests that a number of these individuals had experienced significant trauma and needed significant supports themselves. It is therefore necessary to balance the potential for community capacity building with the need to ensure that individuals within affected communities are able to volunteer and not compromised by their own trauma. Adequately assessing volunteers from within affected communities needs to be a priority.

Finally, volunteers were heavily affected by the events of Black Saturday, with many hearing numerous stories of loss, grief, and trauma from survivors. Whilst The Salvation Army had informal procedures for debriefing volunteers, the process remained spontaneous, ad hoc, and largely was done only when requested. The Salvation Army suggests that the debriefing of volunteers was inadequate across agencies and that a formal process for debriefing volunteers needs to be put in place to ensure volunteers have an opportunity to process what they have experienced during an emergency relief response.

The Salvation Army encourages Government, in consultation with agencies, to develop a model of volunteer management that will assist with the coordination and management of spontaneous volunteers and volunteers from within affected communities. The Salvation Army understands that The Red Cross has done considerable work on volunteer management since Black Saturday, as outlined in their Spontaneous volunteer management resource kit. The Salvation Army supports the principles in this resource kit and the proposed framework for volunteer management.

2. COMMUNITY EMBEDDEDNESS:

Bushfire affected communities have expressed that they felt they have not being listened to and responded to in the way they needed. They also expressed frustration and resentment that services were rolled out “over the top of them” with little community consultation.

Holistic community recovery can only be achieved through consistent investment into capacity building, identifying community leaders, and addressing all groups in the community regardless of how they were impacted by the event. Subgroups such as youth, the elderly, women, men, those that lost family members and homes, and those who feel guilty for not losing anything, need to be supported in ways that enables each group to connect, work together, and collaborate in an inclusive way.

The Salvation Army’s experience working with bushfire affected communities suggests that for an agency to successfully work with a community towards recovery, the agency and its services need to be embedded in the community – meaning the agency and its service workers need to be accepted as part of the community and trusted as an organisation that will remain with the community for

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the “long haul.”

The Salvation Army has worked extensively with several communities since Black Saturday and has achieved significant respect, trust and acceptance as an organisation in those areas. The Salvation Army feels that this trust and acceptance has been achieved by engaging with communities in the following ways over a period of time:

- pre-established presence and trust;
- involvement in community meetings;
- partnership with local councils; and
- working directly in schools.

2.1 Pre-established Presence and Trust

The breadth and geographical scope of Salvation Army services means that the organisation was already well established and respected in a number of communities affected by the Black Saturday bushfires. In Northern Victoria, staff working at local programs and churches were recognised and thought of as members of the community.

On Sunday, 8 February 2009 at 5.30am, The Salvation Army’s local homelessness outreach worker with the Pathways program, and local Murrindindi resident, arrived at the Yea Relief Centre along with many bushfire evacuees.

As she got out of her car, she heard a man say, “There is the Salvo’s lady” and ran to meet her saying his house had been destroyed and he needed help. Nearly two years ago the outreach worker had assisted this man’s son who had been very unwell at the time and was asked to leave home. Although the man did not remember the worker’s name, the fact he recognised her was very powerful for both of them.

A few hours later after realising the scale of the emergency and speaking to the Red Cross, the Pathways outreach worker contacted her program manager. Together they mobilised local Salvation Army staff and contacted a local Target to gather as much material aid as possible for the relief centre. Pathways staff joined local corps officers (ministers) in Seymour at the relief centre and immediately started attending to the needs of now over 700 evacuees at Yea.

Several Pathways staff, including the local outreach worker and her manager, lived at the temporary village set up for evacuees and worked around the clock for two weeks assisting survivors, only leaving sporadically to check on their homes.

The Salvation Army’s pre-established presence in areas such as Yea, the organisation’s recognised and respected brand, and the organisation’s quick response to the bushfires earned the organisation and its workers the respect and trust of community members. During the later recovery stages, this respect and
trust directly contributed to The Salvation Army’s ability to work with communities who felt strongly that they did not want to be thought of as victims, should be in charge of their own rebuilding process, and did not want services imposed on them.

2.2 Involvement in Community Meetings

The Salvation Army was well received at community meetings because Salvation Army staff and chaplains were accepted as part of the community, and were seen as making a continuous effort to listen and respond to the needs and concerns of the community to aid in the collective rebuilding and recovery process.

The Salvation Army has always taken an approach of listening to the needs of the community prior to making decisions about service delivery. The organisation has tried, whenever possible, to adapt services to meet the needs of the clients. The Salvation Army has made a commitment to have at least one representative at community meetings, consultations and network meeting groups whenever possible to facilitate the discussion about what the community wants and what individual clients need. Some meetings have run consistently over a period of time or on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Some meetings were one off workshops, consultations or information sessions to notify communities of new grants, assistance packages or changes in programs.

The proposed closure of several relief centres in Whittlesea required significant communication with the community due to the sensitivity of relief centres and the role they had played throughout the relief and recovery responses. Through multiple community and inter-agency meetings, The Salvation Army worked with community members and other agencies in the area to determine which relief centres would be closed and merged with other existing facilities. Participating in these meetings allowed individuals to express their concerns over closures and engaged these individuals to ensure they were included in the decision making process.

Salvation Army staff met a lady at a Traralgon South pamper evening The Salvation Army helped fund. She tearfully thanked staff for listening to her. Staff had visited her sewing group (started since the fires) and taken down a list of requests the ladies had. Hers was for people to get help with massage as many were sore and tired. At the pamper evening, funded in conjunction with RAV and Latrobe City, a local masseur had been invited to attend. They lady who thanked us stated she was overwhelmed that a request she had made at a community group had come to fruition.

Attending community meetings provides an opportunity to have a “two-way” conversation with community members and aid agencies and ensures that communication with concerned individuals is as open as possible. Attendance at these meetings also allow professional staff to collaborate with other services, refrain from duplicating services and form partnerships for on-going, longer term support.
2.3 Schools

The impact of the bushfires on children and young people has been immense. Children cope with trauma in a variety of ways and the behaviour in schools has evolved throughout the years demonstrating the continued need for supports to help children grapple with the implications of the bushfires.

Young people in bushfire affected areas have made a clear statement to their communities, schools, friends, families, and service agencies that they do not want to be identified as “bushfire affected,” as they believe all young people living or attending school in these areas have been impacted. As a result, Salvation Army youth workers work with all young people and students regardless of how they were impacted by the Black Saturday Bushfires, or if they identify themselves as bushfire affected or not. By focusing on all youth, the label of “bushfire affected” is removed and allows youth workers to focus on the presenting issues for young people, and build a rapport based on trust and support.

Common trends in young people currently seeking support include: mental health issues, family and relationship breakdown, grief and loss, bullying issues, lack of self esteem, risk taking, body image, social and geographic isolation, employment seeking, study support/seeking, health and recreation links, homelessness, drug and alcohol issues and general youth support.

A young person in Kinglake has not been engaged in training or work since the Black Saturday bushfires. The client has been struggling with a range of issues including self esteem, substance and alcohol use, accommodation, and ongoing family conflict. A Crossroads youth worker has been working collaboratively with the client on setting goals to help improve his situation. The client has moved from a feeling of hopelessness and being ‘stuck’ to understanding where he wants to go in life. His accommodation situation has improved substantially, and he has applied for a pre apprenticeship automotive course with the hope of gaining an apprenticeship in the industry.

The Salvation Army has also done considerable work with the Salvos Youth and Music Project to work with youth in bushfire affected communities to encourage them to express themselves through music, song writing and visual art. The program works with local schools and community music groups in an effort to engage youth. Workshops are held with youth workers and music consultants who coach participants in music writing skills and encourage them to vent their feelings. As part of the program, participants perform their songs at high schools and local community festivals. To date, over 350 bushfire affected youth have participated, over 60 songs have been written, 49 songs have been recorded and two CDs have been compiled.
2.4 Councils

Leadership is needed from local councils if a coordinated, whole-of-community, emergency response is to be achieved.

The Salvation Army worked with a number of local councils during the Black Saturday bushfires and Victorian floods. It became apparent from these experiences that councils have different capabilities and some are better prepared for emergencies than others. Some councils had well developed emergency management plans which were able to be implemented effectively. Other councils had no emergency management plans at all.

As a result, The Salvation Army supports the development of a state-wide, coordinated model which can assist councils in reaching a common standard for emergency management, while maintaining enough flexibility to meet the needs of each individual council. As part of this process, The Salvation Army strongly advocates for additional resourcing to be provided to councils to assist them in meeting this increase in responsibility.

The Salvation Army also encourages local aid agencies to be included in the development of Emergency Management Plans (EMPs). These agencies have significant expertise in service delivery. As a result, their incorporation into EMPs provides councils with significant financial leverage and increased service capacity.

The Salvation Army also advocates for increased partnership with local councils...
and aid agencies during relief and recovery responses. The Salvation Army has successfully partnered with a number of local councils to increase positive outcomes for affected communities.

In partnership with La Trobe City Council and the Bendigo Bank, The Salvation Army jointly funded an eight day sailing trip from Williamstown to Port Adelaide for 23 bushfire affected youth from across Gippsland.

A Salvation Army Youth Worker involved in the trip described the voyage as challenging on many levels for all involved. Not only were young people out of their familiar surroundings and a long way from home, but tasks were physically and emotionally taxing with participants taking shifts or “watches” at all hours, hoisting sails, cleaning the galley, and scrubbing the deck.

The participants came from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. However, as the voyage continued, a sense of team work and comradery grew, with the young people looking out for each other and encouraging their team members to pursue challenges such as climbing the mast, and going out on the yards. More came out of the voyage than just a completed sailing trip. Young people took a journey of discovery, with many describing it as “life changing.” Many parents reported that “the kids haven’t stopped talking about it” and some “wanted to keep sailing”.

Many kids have said that the voyage was a chance to get away from it all. Young people had experienced loss of property, social connections, and watched family friends and neighbors go through much stress and trauma. For most, the journey gave them a chance to clear their heads, set personal goals and have fun. One mum told us her teenager returned with a renewed sense of motivation. She added it seems they are more easily able to think about things such as homework and chores around the house – and longer term goals. The mum enthusiastically told us how her teenager seemed more settled and happy.

The Salvation Army’s experience working with bushfire affected communities also suggests that while some communities are unified and have a common vision for the rebuilding of their communities and lives, other communities are fractured. In many cases, the most impacted individuals in a community may be too vulnerable to speak up for themselves. As a result, the most marginalised individuals in a community are the least likely to be heard. Leadership from local government is needed to ensure that all factions within a community are fairly and accurately represented to higher levels of government.

3. CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION:

Community feedback also suggests that consistent communication about financial assistance and service delivery throughout the initial relief and recovery responses was needed. Many bushfire survivors have expressed to Salvation Army staff the frustration and despair they felt at having to navigate a complex service system and being given conflicting information about assistance available.
Most of these individuals were already in extremely vulnerable positions. The additional trauma caused by an overly complicated service system often exacerbated the sense of loss bushfire survivors felt and in many cases significantly hindered their recovery process.

Based on significant case management work and many conversations with bushfire survivors, The Salvation Army has identified the following aspects of the relief and recovery responses which the organisation feels could most benefit from improved, consistent communication, including:

- financial assistance; and
- case management and program delivery.

### 3.1 Financial Assistance

Excessive state government announcements advertising multiple new assistance schemes in the days immediately following the bushfires caused significant confusion, frustration and trauma to bushfire survivors on the ground. With each new wave of funding, new assistance schemes were announced, raising the hopes of survivors. However, each new scheme was accompanied by a new set of criteria which either qualified or disqualified survivors from assistance. For many people being asked to prove their residence in the area when all documentation had been destroyed and then being told they did not qualify for assistance, for some multiple times, created significant stress for individuals and families.

The Salvation Army considers the approach used by the Victorian Government to provide financial assistance to Black Saturday bushfires survivors to be overly tedious, prescriptive and inappropriate, as it required survivors to work to meet a certain set of criteria to qualify for funding. Instead, The Salvation Army suggests that the Victorian Government adopt a flexible funding approach which focuses on the needs of the clients and recommends that the Victorian Government strongly consider adopting a model similar to that put in place by the Federal Government and Centrelink during the immediate response to the bushfires.

Centrelink quickly adopted and maintained a clear, consistent message throughout the relief response that offered a large, one-time, assistance payment to all individuals and families in a community regardless of how they were affected. The approach of offering immediate financial assistance, instead of “drip feeding” over the course of several grants as the State Government did, simplified the expectations of those affected and in crisis and reduced the potential for disappointment.

By comparison, the state financial aid system proved to be complex, difficult to communicate to potential recipients, and harder for people to access. This was certainly The Salvation Army’s experience when trying to communicate to recipients why they didn’t qualify for certain grants and trying to assist them in navigating the financial aid system. It is, therefore, The Salvation Army’s opinion that the approach taken by Centrelink functioned significantly better than the approach adopted by Victorian Government because community members were given one, clear message about how much funding to expect and who could qualify.
The Salvation Army suggests that in the initial stages of relief and recovery, Centrelink’s approach represented best practice and should be adopted. In the weeks and months after an emergency, a more tailored approach to funding assistance can be adopted to ensure that individuals in greatest need receive appropriate amounts of funding. However, during the initial, often chaotic, days and weeks following an emergency the consistent message put forward by Centrelink met the needs of clients well.

3.2 Case Management and Program Delivery

Many bushfire survivors suffered an enormous amount of loss and trauma and, as a result, have long lasting and complex needs and often struggle to tell their stories. It is therefore extremely important for survivors to have consistency in their case management in order to avoid requiring survivors to tell their stories repeatedly.

Communication between Government and communities about the amount of funding available to community programs, particularly those funded under the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service (VBCMS), and how long they would be funded to operate was lacking. Each time VBCMS was scaled down, bushfire survivors suffered significant anxiety regarding how long a program or a case worker would remain in the area. In many cases, the scaling down of VBCMS resulted in clients having multiple case workers which placed significant additional stress on individuals and families and in many cases inhibited their recovery. It is important to ensure that individuals have consistency in their services, or at the very least are given clear messages on what to expect from service providers and how long agencies were going to be funded to stay.

Steve and Matt lost family members in the fires. Steve presented at Crossroads with many issues including family break down with Matt and his new expecting partner, Sarah; anger management issues; alcohol abuse; and difficulties with government agencies. He had also recently had a falling out with the real estate agency managing his emergency property resulting in his family needing a place to live.

A number of agencies had attempted to engage with the family; however, due to the trauma Steve had suffered, his emotional recovery had been slow and he had failed to engage with any of the counsellors he had been to see. He continues to struggle with anger management and often uses alcohol as a means of coping. He has ongoing severe feelings of grief and loss which has impacted on his mental health and is reluctant to attend counselling, due to past experiences. Matt’s behaviour had also changed negatively, as he struggled with Sarah entering into the home, and had not spoken of the fires since they occurred. He remains reluctant to discuss what he has been going through and has become increasingly isolated (continue page 20...)
Steve is clearly not in a position to successfully navigate the service system on his own and is heavily reliant on Crossroads staff and his case worker. Due to his complex set of needs, the needs of his family, and his inability to fully engage with the service system, a recurring change of case workers would be, and has been, detrimental to his improvement.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Victorian Government need to develop a simple structure of continued case management and support services and then communicate that to affected communities in one, consistent message so community members know what to expect and do not feel they have suddenly been abandoned by service agencies and Government.

The Government should learn from past experiences and adopt a more structured, simpler approach to handling case management which can be clearly and consistently communicated to communities throughout the relief and recovery stages. The Salvation Army suggests that the Bushfire Communities Support Program (BCSP), developed later in the recovery process, presents a good model for case management and assistance as it provides three service types which allow for individuals and families to access services in a number of ways according to the level of assistance they desire. BCSP also has capacity to provide long term support which allows for consistency in program delivery and case management.

4. LONG TERM RESPONSE TO RECOVERY:

Research into the 2003 Canberra bushfires\(^4\) indicates that the recovery process for communities takes place over a number of years and supports must be in place for an extended period of time. Given this context, providing communities with various forms of support in shorter blocks of time such as six months does not ensure communities will recover and reach their full potential.

Members of a community who were vulnerable before an emergency will be even more vulnerable after the event and will take longer to recover. Some may never fully recover. If the Government is serious about achieving community resilience, a longer term approach needs to be adopted in regards to emergency recovery.

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The Salvation Army continues to operate services and intensive outreach case management in Whittlesea, Seymour, Traralgon and surrounding areas. The Salvation Army feels strongly that significant positive outcomes have been achieved for affected communities and advocates to Government that similarly structured, long term, intensive case management, and whole-of-community services be integrated into the Governments emergency management and response plans.

4.1 Crossroads Bushfire Recovery Community Outreach Program

The Crossroads Bushfire Recovery Community Outreach Program is funded by The Salvation Army, Sony Youth Foundation and DHS and has been operating since December 2009. The program is comprised of five Family Outreach Workers and two Youth Outreach Workers and was established to provide ongoing and long-term support to bushfire affected families, individuals and young people with multiple and complex needs in the city of Whittlesea, Shire of Nillumbik and Kinglake Ranges. The program offers flexible support through outreach support, case management, youth support, family support, financial support, advocacy, and referrals and works with clients over several months, or in extremely complex cases, several years. The program invests a significant amount of time in building strong relationships with schools, community agencies, volunteer groups, Neighbourhood Houses and local government to provide a wide range of social and recreational activities designed to respond to the trauma and loss experienced by clients.

The program is based in Whittlesea where the Laurel Street relief centre, which was opened three days after the bushfires, is still operating. The centre’s continued presence has maintained a continuum for long term, support from The Salvation Army. Crossroads staff provide drop-in support at the relief centre, but the program primarily operates as an assertive outreach program. Clients are referred to the Crossroads program through DHS’s Bushfire Community Support Program, their partners, Centrelink, Community Health Centres, Schools, Doctors, community agencies and self referrals. The majority of self-referrals are individuals and families who come into the relief centre seeking financial assistance and end up meeting with staff and discussing various other issues impacting their recovery.

Crossroads works to facilitate social participation, inclusion, economic independence and resilience in individuals to enable them to recover from the bushfire. The program uses a strengths-based approach which builds on what people have achieved, even if survival is the main achievement. Crossroads staff assist clients in setting goals for their recovery and continuously update goals as circumstances change. For clients living in temporary accommodation and/or rebuilding their permanent homes, the instability of their situation can make focusing on their physical and mental health needs secondary to their housing situation. Crossroads staff must address housing and rebuilding issues if the client considers this their primary goal, while simultaneously addressing the various other issues associated with significant trauma, grief and loss.
The program also focuses on a whole-of-community approach to rebuilding which believes that community recovery is a holistic phenomenon, rather than a targeted approach. Crossroads staff attend community meetings, Psychosocial and Health/Well-being Groups, and Youth Networks in an effort to address the needs of the community as a whole and does not target individuals labelled as “bushfire affected”. Such meeting often involve community members, medical and mental health professionals, school welfare staff, DHS representatives and other community agencies. These meetings allow all those involved to discuss on-going needs and trends observed within individuals and the community, as well as identify potential gaps.

Crossroads recognises that each person expresses trauma, grief and loss differently and some may suppress their pain for long periods of time before problems become prevalent. As a result, it is important to provide services for a long period of time to allow individuals to seek services when and how it is right for them.

A Crossroads Family and Community Outreach Worker is currently working with a young mother with two young children. The devastation of the fires has resulted in family breakdown, with the father currently having extremely limited access to his daughters. This family lost everything and witnessed a horrific amount of devastation, including seeing a number of dead bodies.

The family has constant nightmares and flashbacks. The mother is always hyper alert, doesn’t sleep much, and doesn’t feel she has much support from her family and friends as they were all severely affected by the fires. The eldest daughter isn’t coping well with school and the family is financially strained. The mother would like to return to work yet can’t as she is unable to afford childcare. At the time of referral, the family was living in the Kinglake Village in a one bedroom facility. The only toilet and shower were communal ones some walk away. Many people in the village were dealing with multiple drug, alcohol, and mental health issues and the mother did not feel safe from her ex partner there.

Crossroads has been able to assist this mother in raising funds to enable her to move into a small transportable flat on a family property. She has been referred to a financial counsellor and encouraged to seek medical advice for her depression and counselling for her and her daughters. Crossroads has also advocated for her to have childcare fees waived.

Crossroads now supports this family on a weekly basis with emotional assistance over the telephone and weekly visits. Future options for training and the mother’s return to work are being addressed, as well as her mental health, wellbeing, and her role as an individual and a single mother. Periodically, a case worker takes the family shopping as they cannot afford petrol and feel extremely isolated.

The provision of free, ongoing counselling for the mother and children would mean a world of difference to this family. Assistance relating to costs of rebuilding would also be beneficial. There is also an ongoing need for emotional support, whether it be two or three years down the track.
The Crossroads program has received an overwhelming level of positive feedback from clients, DHS staff, and others who worked in the communities. The program worked extensively on trust issues, collective problem solving, and building community support and social networks. Staff were described as having a high level of commitment and professional skill and did not “impose themselves on bushfire survivors.” Workers attended local community meetings to embed the program workers in real community processes offering support where requested and empowering local people to determine personal and community priorities.

4.2 Pathways Bushfire Recovery Program

The Pathways Bushfire Recovery Program was developed in September 2009 in an effort to engage highly vulnerable and marginalised bushfire survivors with multiple and complex needs who had failed to be captured by the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service (VBCMS) and mainstream services in the Mitchell and Murrindindi Shires.

The program focuses on promoting self-sufficiency, harm minimisation, social justice, equality, and fostering hope through a strengths-based model which provides intensive case management and assertive outreach support to clients. Pathways staff are highly skilled in numerous areas including mental health, alcohol and drug, counselling, community health and development, and case management and provide services to clients such as advocacy and referral support, financial support, group discussions, service system navigation, or simply offering clients the opportunity to chat with a chaplain or worker over a cup of coffee, to name a few.

The Pathways Bushfire Recovery Program has developed some well received social groups that encourage engagement and social inclusion including a men’s groups, The Salvos Youth and Music Program, Mitchell Rejuvenation Project, the Clean Up Crew, and a women’s group. Strong relationships have also been formed with Habitat for Humanity and the Lions Club to continue to support survivors. Each group takes a whole-of-community approach which does not only focus on individuals extremely affected by the fires on Black Saturday, but focuses on all individuals within a community to rebuild trust and a sense of community among all members.

The formation of these groups has proved invaluable to linking individuals with others in their community and helping them identify additional support services they may need. Over time, a number of men involved in the men’s group have been able to articulate their additional needs in the safe space created by the men there. This has provided a valuable opportunity for outreach workers to be able to refer individuals to additional services.

Over the past years, Pathways has also developed strong relationships with DHS housing staff to support families and individuals living in the temporary villages. These relationships have allowed for Pathways to successfully work with DHS to assist the remaining residents to exit the temporary villages.
The Bushfire Communities Support Program closes in June 2012, leaving The Salvation Army as the only organisation delivering outreach services to these communities. The Salvation Army works with many individuals and families still struggling with their long term recovery. As such, the organisation has significant concerns about the discontinuation of services for these individuals and families.

On Black Saturday, Sean, a highly paid professional, volunteered with an Emergency Services Organisation and assisted survivors for several weeks after the fires before returning to work. After the fires, Sean started to experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but refused to acknowledge any trauma. He often would call his wife, distressed, confused, and lost, and once was reported missing to be found wandering several kilometres from home in a distressed and emotional state with no shoes. His PTSD finally resulted in several hospitalisations during which his mental health issues were attempted to be addressed.

At one stage, Sean overdosed on his prescription medication and was admitted to hospital in critical condition. Amazingly, he survived but has suffered extensive, multiple physical health problems, including contracting pneumonia, respiratory problems, organ failure and a brain injury.

Accessing financial support has been extremely difficult for Sean and his family as they were deemed “not affected” because the family did not lose their house or possessions. The ESO has denied liability for Sean’s health, resulting in the family entering into an ongoing legal battle to continue to access funds and becoming in danger of losing their home due to financial pressures.

Pathways staff have worked with Sean, his wife who also suffers from a disability, and his children to assist the family in a number of ways including, navigating the service system, accessing various grants to help the family’s financial situation, linking Sean with mental health programs, providing counselling for the rest of the family, and liaising with medical professionals to address Sean’s, and his wife’s, ongoing physical and mental health needs.

Pathways is still in constant communication with this family and has put in a total of 597 hours of work with Sean and his family since November 2009. This family will need significant, ongoing support over the course of many years.
5. GREEN PAPER OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

Based on The Salvation Army’s experiences with emergency relief and recovery responses during the Black Saturday bushfires and 2011 floods, The Salvation Army would like to comment on several of the proposed options put forward in the Green Paper and how The Salvation Army predicts the propose options will affect interactions between Government and NGOs.

Option 5: Assign responsibility for relief and recovery to a specific Ministerial portfolio, separate to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services portfolio.

The Salvation Army supports the proposition of creating a specific portfolio for emergency relief and recovery. Including relief and recovery under the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, where it currently sits, does not recognise the fundamental differences between the initial response of ESOs and the long term work required to achieve recovery.

It is important to remember that a community’s ability to recover from an emergency is inherently linked to the quality and timeliness of the emergency relief response. Creating a separate portfolio which specifically focuses on the relationship between relief and recovery would ensure an understanding of how an emergency relief response needs to flow into a coordinated and consistent recovery response in order to have a long term focus on the wellbeing and capacity of individuals and communities.

Upon creation of a separate portfolio for relief and recovery, The Salvation Army recommends that responsibility for this portfolio sit with the Premier. By placing the Premier in charge of the Emergency Relief and Recovery Portfolio, the Government ensures that relief and recovery will achieve a more genuinely whole-of-government approach, as was advocated in the green paper. The Salvation Army does not support the new portfolio being given to a Minister solely responsible to DHS, as the potential for relief and recovery to be siloed off from agencies such as the CFA, SES and police is great and could further undermine any efforts by Government to respond to emergencies in a holistic way.

In addition to structurally ensuring a whole-of-government approach to relief and recovery, The Salvation Army suggests that there is significant community expectation within bushfire and flood affected communities that the state government demonstrate a commitment to holistic community recovery and capacity building.

Option 11: Develop a standard model for large-scale relief, recovery and reconstruction.

The Salvation Army supports a model similar to that of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA). This model actively engaged community organisations, NFPs, and NGOs. In contrast, the Secretaires’ Flood Recovery Group did not include community organisations in the relief and recovery process and as a result failed to adequately leverage the expertise and resources of NGOs and is not supported by The Salvation Army.
In addition to adopting a model patterned after that of VBRRA, The Salvation Army advocates increased capacity to be developed at local DHS offices in communities across the state. The Salvation Army’s experience with local DHS offices suggests their ability to work and communicate with NGOs and NFPs is positive, particularly in eastern Victoria during the Gippsland fires.

Local DHS offices are integrated into the local community and thus well placed to understand the community’s needs. The Salvation Army feels that there is significant potential in the local DHS offices and that an increase in resources and capacity could be a vehicle for driving a coordinated, locally tailored, and collaborative response to emergency management that would include local communities, NFPs, NGOs, and all the State and Local levels of Government.

**Option 19: Replace the current Recovery Coordinator position in DHS with a Recovery Controller position to lead relief and recovery across all levels of government.**

The Salvation Army does not support the establishment of a Recovery Controller position and advocates for a continuation of the Recovery Coordinator.

The Salvation Army’s ability to respond to the needs of a community is largely due to the organisation’s independence to utilise its assets, whether they are in the form of local services, highly skilled staff, or independent funding to mobilise a response that fits the needs of the community. The ability of The Salvation Army to respond as quickly as it did to the Black Saturday bushfires was because the organisation was able to act quickly, through its own chain of command, independent of Government.

The Salvation Army feels strongly that any attempt by Government to “lead relief and recovery” and “oversee the efforts of all organisations” would significantly stifle the ability of NGOs and NFPs to respond creatively to communities and would render any partnership between Government and these organisations functionally useless. The strength of the “all hazards, all agencies” approach is that all agencies should be able to come together to offer each agencies strengths and work together to achieve a common goal, not be dictated to by one “controller.”

Instead, The Salvation Army calls on the Government to strengthen the Recovery Coordinator position in an effort to coordinate, not oversee, relief and recovery responses between agencies.

**Option 20: Make relief and recovery the responsibility of a new umbrella body.**

The Salvation Army does not support Option 20 on the grounds that over consolidation and regulation of NGO and NFP operations at a top tier of Government does not foster a quick, needs-based response to emergencies.
While a certain level of coordination is necessary between agencies and Government, over regulation does not necessarily mean improved outcomes on the ground will be achieved.

The Salvation Army feels that the creation of a new portfolio dedicated to emergency relief and recovery, the adoption of a VBRRA style model to manage large scale emergencies, and the strengthening of the Recovery Coordinator provides sufficient coordination amongst agencies. Any additional level of consolidation such as an umbrella body would be viewed as overly bureaucratic and cumbersome.

**Option 21: Establish a permanently-staffed dedicated relief and recovery unit within government.**

The Salvation Army strongly supports this option. The current practice of seconding DHS staff to coordinate relief and recovery responses and then sending them back into their full time positions has enshrined the short term model of relief and recovery service provision in the culture of DHS and Government. Recovery has been shown to take a number of years after a significant emergency. Temporary staff, therefore, are not appropriate for emergency relief and recovery responses.

In addition, the presence of permanent staff within DHS is important for building relationships between community groups and agencies. A large part of successful emergency relief and recovery work depends on trusting relationships and respect between community, agencies and government. The Salvation Army strongly believes that strengthening relationships between agencies like The Salvation Army who have significant local knowledge and expertise and DHS would increase the capacity of DHS to successfully implement meaningful and effective policies on the ground in emergency affected areas.

The Salvation Army is very supportive of any initiative that strengthens close, collaborative partnerships between Government and the NGO and NFP sectors which can benefit from each agency’s expertise and foster creative and flexible solutions and programs to benefit Victoria's communities.

**Option 30: Adopt the NZ model of community information where the government delivers realistic messages about the limits of assistance available and the likely period of time that most individuals will need to be self-reliant during an emergency.**

The Salvation Army generally supports and encourages initiatives promoting increased awareness and information for communities. Whether the New Zealand model is entirely appropriate for the Australian case study may need to be further explored, particularly in reference to the Black Saturday bushfires, as it is unlikely the New Zealand model of community information would have had any impact on the loss of life or loss of property given the severity and intensity of the bushfires. However, The Salvation Army feels that the most important thing regarding any information campaign is a consistent and clear message to communities.
Conflicting information from Government, news agencies, radios, and service agencies causes communities significant stress and unnecessary trauma in an emergency setting. Regardless of what community information model the government wishes to adopt, ensuring communities understand what is expected of them, and how and where they can access assistance, is key to minimising additional trauma and starting individuals on a road to recovery.

6. CONCLUSION:

The Salvation Army warmly welcomes the Victorian Government’s Green Paper on Emergency Management and appreciates the opportunity to respond on this important issue, as it is essential to learn from the past in order to better prepare Victorian for future emergencies.

While the Green Paper takes an “all hazards, all agencies” approach to emergency management, The Salvation Army feels that the Green Paper has failed to recognise and address the important contribution NGOs make in emergency management, particularly in regards to emergency relief and recovery responses. As such, The Salvation Army encourages the Victorian Government to acknowledge the vital role NGOs have in successful emergency relief and recovery and to ensure the NGOs are included in future discussions regarding emergency management.

The Salvation Army also suggests that while the Green Paper has a strong focus on emergency preparedness as a way to manage future emergencies, a community’s ability to be “resilient” is not only dependent on preparedness, but is also closely linked to the quality and timeliness of the initial emergency relief response. The relief response must be seamlessly followed by a long term recovery response that is able to meet the needs of a community over the course of a number of years in order for a community to successfully recover and become resilient.

Based on the organisation’s experiences from Black Saturday, the Victorian floods, and the ongoing recovery responses enacted since the Black Saturday bushfires, The Salvation Army has made several points regarding lessons learned and makes several recommendations on how to improve the relief and recovery responses to future emergencies:

- providing a rapid, quality emergency relief response through the use of chaplains and improvements in material aid and volunteer management;
- ensuring services gain communities’ trust and become embedded in the community by being located locally and being actively involved in community meetings, schools and partnerships with local councils;
- maintaining consistent communication with communities regarding financial assistance, case management, and service delivery; and
- providing long term recovery services with assertive outreach and intensive case management through a service model similar to that of the Bushfires Communities Support Program.
Several internal aspects of The Salvation Army enabled the organisation’s holistic response to affected communities including:

- the relationship the organisation has with ESOs;
- the organisation’s hierarchical structure;
- the breadth of services provided to communities throughout the state; and
- the organisation’s recognised and respected brand.

The Salvation Army believes there are a number of other organisations with similar capacities which could also respond to emergencies with the same timeliness and effectiveness. As a result, The Salvation Army strongly advocates for government partnerships with similar organisations to be developed, as an increased, collaborative approach to providing timely and quality emergency relief responses will ensure that affected communities are put on a road towards recovery at the earliest possible stage.

Finally, The Salvation Army supports any effort which increases collaboration between Government and NGOs and increases awareness of the importance of relief and recovery responses in the context of developing a holistic emergency management framework. As a result, The Salvation Army advocates for the creation of a new portfolio dedicated to relief and recovery to sit with the Premier, supports a model for large-scale relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts similar to that of VBRRA, and calls for the continuation of the Recovery Coordinator.

In contrast, The Salvation Army does not support any initiative which seeks to control or dictate the response of NGOs to emergencies, as the ability of NGOs to provide flexible support to communities relies on an NGO’s independence to think creatively about how to utilise resources to best meet the needs of affected communities.

The Salvation Army suggests that the components to successful emergency management listed above be replicated in other organisations’ emergency responses and recommends that these components and the suggested recommendations be incorporated into a state-wide emergency management framework which encourages collaboration between Government and other agencies.

The Salvation Army appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Emergency Management Green Paper and welcomes the opportunity to discuss the content of this submission should any further information be of assistance.
7. APPENDIX A:

7.1 Shires Assisted During the Black Saturday Bushfires

Alpine
Baw Baw
Cardinia
Casey
Corangamite
Greater Bendigo
Hepburn
Horsham
Indigo
La Trobe
Mitchell
Mt Alexander
Murrindindi
Nillumbik
South Gippsland
Southern Grampians
Wellington
Whittlesea
Yarra Ranges

7.2 Shires Assisted During the 2011 Victorian Floods

Ararat
Ballarat
Bendigo
Buloke
Campaspe
Central Goldfields
Corangamite
Gannawarra
Golden Plains
Hepburn
Hindmarsh
Horsham
Loddon
Mildura
Mitchell
Mount Alexander
Moyne
Murrindindi
Northern Grampians
Pyrenees
Swan Hill
Yariambiack