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EXCELLENCE IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT / DISASTER RECOVERY

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Adelaide Hills Council Incident Management Team - Inter-Council Incident Operations Emergency Response Strategy

Adelaide Hills Council is leading the way in collaborative and effective emergency management with its innovative response arrangements. Born from lessons learned from the Sampson Flat, Cudlee Creek and Cherry Gardens bushfires, the Council's Incident Operations Manual and Incident Management Team form the backbone of its preparedness for future emergency events.

A key element of emergency management within Council's Strategic Plan, its Incident Operations Manual, is reviewed, updated and practiced in non-emergency times and is a critical form of preparedness.

When the River Murray high flows impacted South Australia's Riverland communities in late 2022, Council put its transferable emergency management capabilities to the test. By extending its emergency response to assist three Riverland councils, the Adelaide Hills Council proved that having established emergency plans not only benefits their own council but can also support other councils and communities, advancing the entire Local Government sector.

It was recognised that by providing aid and support to the Riverland councils they could in turn support their respective communities. The opportunity to practice and assess Council's own emergency management processes and how they apply to an external emergency was recognised and valuable experience gained.

With its emergency management arrangements principally only put in place to manage emergency events in Council's own area, support of impacted councils provided the opportunity to apply, evaluate and modify Council's existing emergency response arrangements.

Adelaide Hills Council's proactive approach demonstrates the importance of preparedness and highlights the power of having documented and well understood emergency management processes and procedures in place.

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District Council of Kimba - 2022 Severe Weather Event Response

District Council of Kimba infrastructure, particularly the road network, suffered catastrophic damage following the storm event of ex-Tropical Cyclone Tiffany passing through in January 2022. Localised falls of 300mm plus were recorded within many areas of the district, disastrously falling in a short period of time. Damage sustained was estimated at \$9 million, presenting challenges in the short, medium and long term.

The damage impacted Council's budget, depleted its resources and created staffing difficulties. The Kimba Community Emergency Operations Plan was activated, with 25 roads closed, with an additional 75 under restrictions, impacting school bus routes, property access and the delivery of critical emergency services.

Council staff acted quickly to ensure safety and accessibility for all residents. This included engaging with organisations such as the LGA of SA, the Local Government Functional Support Group, Red Cross, neighbouring councils, the Department of Treasury and Finance, other state departments and media. An application was lodged with the Local Government Disaster Recovery Assistance Arrangements in conjunction with two neighbouring councils. Hard work and commitment allowed the application to be lodged 3.5 weeks after the storm event, and on the back of consistent and concentrated advocacy the funding was approved to an unexpected level of 90%, with Council's ability to use normal working hours as an in-kind contribution within 3 days.

Twelve months on and all work programs had been lodged and approved, immediate works completed, planning and budgeting of all works documented, and reconstruction works commenced. Council is confident of its capacity to repair roads to their former high standard within the times negotiated and with minimal inconvenience to residents, demonstrating evidence of a hardworking and dedicated team and a collaborative and well thought out disaster recovery plan.

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Renmark Paringa Council Emergency Incident Management Team – 2022 River Murray Flood Response

In 2022, South Australia faced the second biggest River Murray Flood in 152 years, which the State Government said ‘...will be one of the most, if not the most, significant natural disaster in the state's history.’

With the town of Renmark being situated on a floodplain, Renmark Paringa Council adopted a ‘go hard and go early’ approach to the response phase of this flood emergency.

Whilst the infrastructure works began to remediate the levees, close 29 stormwater outlets and secure 115 houseboats, Council also recognised the importance of providing clarity within the fog and developed a communications strategy.

The communications strategy clearly stated Council’s role and tone; but importantly it broke its audience into various stakeholders and identified what information was required by which segments of the community, utilising various channels to ensure maximum engagement. Council focused on ensuring that the Renmark Paringa community, media and all tiers of government were regularly advised as to Council’s response, and the methodology behind its decision making, to ensure transparency and the demonstration of leadership. Council’s Facebook page at the time of the peak reached a record 207,000 people, with 100% positive engagement.

Not only did Council protect all its townships from the flood, but they also proactively shared every step of the response with stakeholders whilst always being true to their mantra of being calm, confident, factual, and always maintaining an authentic, transparent and empathetic approach. This resulted in government agencies often acting based on Council’s advice and the local community being confident in and rallying around Council’s flood response and journey to recovery.

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