

## Disaster Assistance Policy

Policy Endorsement:	Endorsement required by Council		
Policy Superseded by this Policy:	Disaster Relief Policy		
Directorate:	Corporate Services		
Responsible Officer:	Manager Governance		
Policy Type:	Discretionary		
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1 <sup>st</sup> Adopted by Council	26 September 2011 Minute No. 973	Last Adopted by Council:	11 June 2019 Minute No.
Review Period:	Every 4 Years	Next Review:	March 2023

### 1. Purpose

This Policy has been developed to provide a framework to guide Council's decision to respond to humanitarian crises created by natural and other disasters by way of a financial or in-kind donation to disaster stricken areas, throughout Australia and internationally.

The policy ensures that Council's donations to affected areas are made in a timely and efficient manner and that any donations given are accountable and transparent to the Greater Dandenong community.

### 2. Background

Greater Dandenong City Council believes it has a strong civic duty to support other communities, throughout Australia and internationally in times of humanitarian crises created by natural and other disasters. Greater Dandenong has a diverse community and disasters across the world often affect the families and communities within this City.

In the past, Council has resolved to donate relief funding to communities affected by naturally occurring disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes, flooding, drought, storms and bushfires be they here or overseas.

The Greater Dandenong community has, throughout each disaster, expressed its significant compassion and support for the victims of disaster stricken areas, and has supported Council's decision to provide financial aid.

Based on advice from government departments, financial support is often the most immediate and effective way of offering assistance to those affected by disaster. In some instances in-kind aid may also be beneficial to the recovery efforts where skilled staff are able to volunteer their time and knowledge to the affected community.

It is not generally recommended that material aid such as non-perishable food items, clothing, medical supplies, etc. are donated as they are often found impractical or inappropriate for the climate and culture and do not meet the priority needs of those affected.

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Research shows that material aid, unless specifically requested, has proven costly in time, money and labour as it requires sorting, storing and transporting.

## Scope

This policy is only applicable to Council's response to natural and humanitarian crises and excludes events that are covered by Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

Donations will be limited to financial and in-kind aid. Other fundraising events and activities will be dealt with outside of this policy.

In most instances donations will only be made to government or accredited agencies.

Council will generally resolve to apply this policy at a Council Meeting, however in times of urgency, Council may direct officers to arrange for disaster assistance donations to be made outside of the Council Meeting process.

## 3. Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter – Compatibility Statement

All matters relevant to the Victorian Human Rights Charter have been considered in the preparation of this policy and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter.

## 4. References

- Originally adopted at the Ordinary Council Meeting of 26 September 2011
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006
- AusAID (Australian Government Aid program)
- Emergency Management Plan

## 5. Definitions

**Natural Disaster** is the effect of a natural hazard ie. flood, drought, fire, tsunami, hurricane, earthquake, or tornado, which leads to financial, environmental and/or human losses.

**Humanitarian Crisis** is an event or series of events which represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area. Armed conflicts, epidemics, famine, natural disaster and other major emergencies may all involve or lead to a humanitarian crisis.

**Event** for the purpose of this policy, an event will describe a disaster that is so catastrophic that it overwhelms the normal social and material support systems of those affected.

**Donation** is a gift or contribution. Donations can be, in-kind or financial.

## 6. Council Policy

Council may wish to respond to a natural disaster or crisis by making a contribution to a charity or charities which provide humanitarian assistance throughout Australia or internationally to those communities affected.

The amount to be contributed will generally be determined by resolution of Council and will be limited to financial or in-kind aid, unless specifically requested by the relevant aid agency.

An early decision to donate either financial aid or in-kind aid is essential and most effective when made within the immediate stages following a disaster or crisis to assist with rescue efforts and minimise human loss.

### **Determining the Eligibility of a Natural Disaster/Humanitarian Crisis**

Following the immediate occurrence of a natural disaster/humanitarian crisis the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer will make a decision as to whether the event meets the criteria of this policy. Where it is determined that the nature of the event meets the criteria, a discussion item will be brought before the next Council or Councillor Briefing Session for consideration.

### **Funding Resources**

As disastrous events are not foreseeable, donations will be sourced from existing budget allocations in the first instance.

### **Financial Contribution**

Financial donations will be based on the severity of the disaster and at the discretion of Council and will generally range between \$5,000 and \$20,000. The actual amount is to be decided by Council on a case-by-case basis.

### **In-kind Contribution**

Donations of in-kind support will require the resolution of Council and for logistical purposes is best limited, but not restricted to, disasters that occur within metropolitan and regional Victoria.

In-kind support may include time, personal or organisational expertise, advice or other organisational resources.

### **Criteria for donation**

The following is to be considered when deciding on an appropriate donation:

- the scale of the disaster;
- the capacity of other government agencies and organisations to respond to the disaster;
- the need for ongoing support ie. rebuilding disaster stricken areas once the initial crises has been dealt with;
- the impact of any such crises on our immediate region and community, and
- the affected areas connection to the cultural origin of residents of Greater Dandenong.

### **Donation Recipients**

Financial donations will be made to government or aid agencies accredited by AusAID, and/or equivalent accrediting agency. Donations may be made to community groups but will not be made to individuals.



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## **Financial Donation to a Community Group**

In the absence of accreditation, Council will determine the legitimacy of a community group requesting assistance.

Only City of Greater Dandenong based community groups who have a majority of members who are residents or ratepayers will be eligible for donation.

If a community group is eligible for donation, a signed agreement must be made between the City of Greater Dandenong and the community group stating that the donation will be used strictly for the purpose for which it was donated.

## **Responsibilities**

**The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer** are responsible for making an initial evaluation, having regard to the nature of the event and the donation criteria, and where required, submitting a discussion item to the next Councillor Briefing Session.

**Council** is responsible for approving all donations generally by resolution however in times of urgency, Council may direct officers to arrange for disaster relief donations to be made outside of the Council Meeting process.

**Media and Communications** will provide a media release to inform the community of Council's donation, ensuring that community confidence is maintained in the use of community contributions to relief aid, and the provision of regular updates to Council and the community on additional support that can be offered.

## **7. Related Documents**

Municipal Emergency Management Plan