

# WYE RIVER & SEPARATION CREEK RESETTLEMENT PLAN

**INITIAL PLAN APRIL 2016**  
Version 1

Working in conjunction with  
Communities, Government,  
Agencies and Business



## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>FOREWORD</b> .....   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1. SITUATION OVERVIEW</b> .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.1. <b>BACKGROUND</b> .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.2. <b>INCIDENT SUMMARY</b> .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.3. <b>IMPACT</b> .....  | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>2. RESETTLEMENT AND RECONNECTION OF WYE RIVER AND SEPARATION CREEK</b> ..... | <b>7</b>  |
| 2.1. <b>EARLY RECOVERY GOVERNANCE</b> .....                                     | <b>7</b>  |
| 2.2. <b>WYE RIVER SEPARATION CREEK RESETTLEMENT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK</b> .....  | <b>8</b>  |
| 2.3. <b>WYE RIVER SEPARATION CREEK RESETTLEMENT DELIVERY FRAMEWORK</b> .....    | <b>8</b>  |
| 2.4. <b>DELIVERY FRAMEWORK GOVERNANCE</b> .....                                 | <b>10</b> |
| 2.4.1. <b>WRSC RESETTLEMENT LEADERSHIP GROUP</b> .....                          | <b>10</b> |
| 2.4.2. <b>WRSC RESETTLEMENT PROJECT CO-ORDINATION GROUP.</b> .....              | <b>10</b> |
| 2.4.3. <b>THE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE AND THE PLAN</b> .....             | <b>11</b> |
| <b>3. RESETTLEMENT PLANS BY STREAM</b> .....                                    | <b>11</b> |
| 3.1. <b>COMMUNITY CONNECTION</b> .....  | <b>11</b> |
| 3.2. <b>COMMUNITY WELLBEING</b> .....   | <b>13</b> |
| 3.3. <b>CLEAN UP</b> .....  | <b>14</b> |
| 3.4. <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> .....  | <b>15</b> |
| 3.5. <b>PLANNING AND REBUILDING</b> .....                                       | <b>17</b> |
| 3.6. <b>FLORA AND FAUNA, BEACHSCAPE</b> .....                                   | <b>21</b> |
| 3.7. <b>BUSINESS &amp; TOURISM</b> .....  | <b>25</b> |
| 3.8. <b>RECOVERY SURVEY INITIATIVES</b> .....                                   | <b>28</b> |
| <b>ATTACHMENT 1: WRSC PLAN RESPONSE TO THE RECOVERY SURVEY</b> .....            | <b>30</b> |

## Foreword

The bushfires of Christmas Day 2015 in Wye River and Separation Creek remind us that the Australian landscape while breathtakingly beautiful, is also prey to fires that can have devastating consequences for the environment, communities and individuals.

The execution of a well developed community and emergency services response plan resulted in no lives being lost however 109 homes were destroyed and many others suffered significant damage. These homes naturally hold great emotional significance for many residents, with family connections to the area reaching back many generations. The loss of habitat for native flora and fauna and the impact on two important water catchments will take many years to regenerate, while the economic impacts across the direct area and surrounding region, will also be felt for many years to come.

Emergency Management Victoria, the Colac Otway Shire, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and the Department of Health and Human Resources, as the primary agencies responsible for a range of recovery activities, understand that each individual, family, community and business has different needs in relation to recovery from the fire. Accordingly, the agencies have joined together to ensure that these communities are able to access the necessary assistance needed to aid their recovery and maximise their ability to rebuild and resettle with minimum barriers. The aim is to support resettlement over the months and years it may take, in a way that is safe, timely, efficient, cost effective and respectful of those different needs.

This Initial Resettlement Plan identifies the range of actions that are being delivered to facilitate the rebuilding and resettlement effort, guided by legislative and funding requirements. It draws together what would have previously been a range of individual action plans across State Government departments, local government and other organisations into a comprehensive, co-ordinated, transparent and accountable plan. Actions are based on data verified through detailed assessments of the fire area, identifying lead responsibility, timeframes, indicators of success and resources required. It has been developed at the same time as activities on the ground are underway and the activities within it will continue to evolve over time, fed by ongoing consultation with, and advice provided by, the community.

The next phase is to work with the community to develop the vision and set priorities for the resettlement and renewal for Wye River and Separation Creek to ensure the community is able to build on existing connections and further enhance resilience. To this end, the Wye River Separation Creek community and the Community Resilience Committee will be key partners in the further development and delivery of activities within this plan.

Craig Lapsley

Emergency Management Commissioner

Sue Wilkinson

Chief Executive Officer  
Colac Otway Shire

Adam Fennessy

Secretary DELWP

## 1. SITUATION OVERVIEW

### 1.1. Background

The township of Wye River is located east of Geelong between Lorne and Apollo Bay. Just to the north of Wye River is the residential settlement of Separation Creek, both are located in the local government area of Colac Otway Shire (COS) and situated along the well-travelled Great Ocean Road.

Prior to the bush fire this community of approximately 100-120 permanent residents, was typified by a diverse ownership and use structure including:

- A significant number of dwellings that are holiday and investment homes;
- A high reliance on tourism to generate local business;
- A high number of part-time residents with deeply embedded connections to the community/area;
- A high number of non-residents and visitors from across the nation and abroad during peak periods of the year.



Fig 1: Map of Wye River and Separation Creek and surrounding region

### 1.2. Incident Summary

The Wye River-Jamieson Track Fire commenced north of the Jamieson Track in the Great Otway National Park, eight kilometres west of Wye River. Fire ignition was due to a lightning strike on 19 December 2015. On Friday 25 December 2015, strong northerly winds caused the fire to create spot fires outside containment lines. The Great Ocean Road was closed between Skenes Creek and Lorne and the communities of Separation Creek, Wye River and Kennett River were evacuated. With predicted intense and erratic fire behaviour, the control agency recommended that the people of Lorne evacuation of Lorne also. The fire crossed the Great Ocean Road and burnt north of Separation Creek, impacting the coastal townships of Separation Creek and Wye River.

Due to hot weather forecast for 31 December 2015, the communities of Kennett River, Grey River and Wongarra were evacuated as a fire safety measure.

Relief Centres were established at the Apollo Bay Leisure Centre and at the Surf Coast Shire Offices in Torquay, providing relief and respite support to people evacuated or impacted. Fire affected areas remained closed over the New Year's weekend. The Great Ocean Road was reopened to the public on 6 January 2016. On 21 January 2016, 34 days after ignition, the 2,500 hectare fire was listed as contained.



**Fig 2: Map of Lorne-Jamieson Track Fire Extent: 30 December 2015**

### 1.3. Impact

On 26 December 2015, Impact Assessment Teams were deployed to assess losses and the community messages were downgraded. Numerous hot spots remained on the fire ground and construction of control lines and implementation of control strategies continued.

#### Areas burnt

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Total Area Burnt   | 2,520 Ha; |
| Public Land Burnt  | 2,125 Ha; |
| Private Land Burnt | 395 Ha.   |

#### Private Property damage

The property losses from the Wye River-Jamieson Track fire have been significant. Confirmed losses reported a total of 109 households - 18 houses at Separation Creek and 91 at Wye River, with a range of partially damaged or impacted properties.

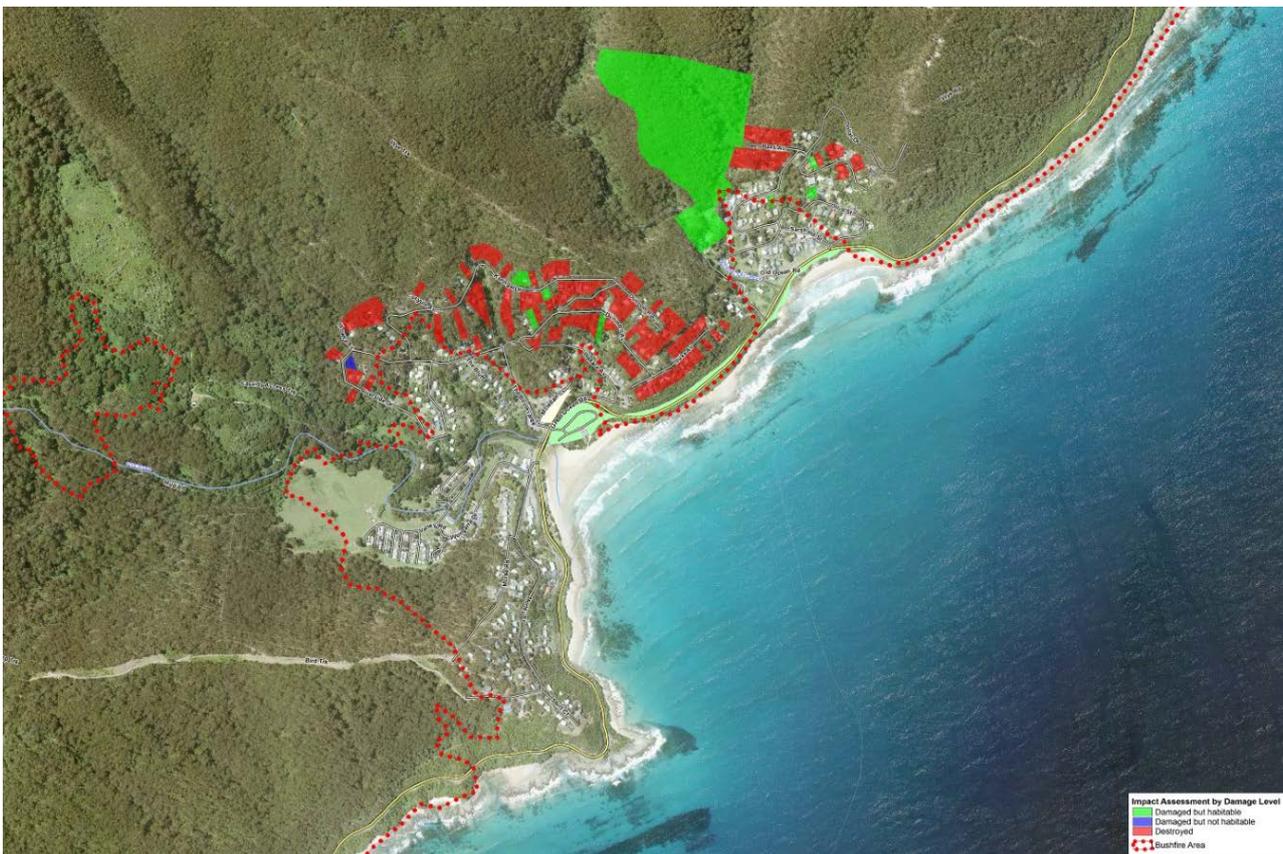


Figure 3: Private Property Impact Assessment Damage to residences in Wye River and Separation Creek (Source: Colac Otway Shire March 2016):

### Public Property Damage

A range of public infrastructure was impacted upon by the fires:

- Roads impacted in bushfire affected area and retaining walls;
- Bridges and major culverts;
- Signs, guide posts etc; and
- Water tanks.

### Housing impacts

Impact assessments conducted have confirmed that 15 of the houses were primary residences and the remaining were a mix of uses including holiday and part-time residences. A large amount of the houses lost are holiday homes, many of which would normally be rented out to visitors to the area. Of the 15 houses identified as permanent residences, all residents have found alternative short and medium term accommodation.

### Business impacts

The initial impact assessment reveals a significant reduction in visitors to the Great Ocean Road including Wye River and Separation Creek in comparison to previous years. Due to the loss of overnight accommodation for visitors to the area during peak periods there has been significant loss of rental revenue for property owners and other businesses.

The closure of the Great Ocean Road resulted in re-routing of through traffic, including coach tours, along the inland route through Colac and Camperdown, with significant consequences on tourist spend along the Great Ocean Road.

The impact of clean up and rebuilding also has potential to further impact on tourist visitation.

## 2. RESETTLEMENT AND RECONNECTION OF WYE RIVER AND SEPARATION CREEK

The importance of community-focussed outcomes is central to the Initial Plan and activities, and is informed by a range of state and local government requirements, data, principles and information provided by the community to this point.

The key principles, drivers and methods guiding the Wye River and Separation Resettlement Plan are:

### Principles

- Safety of all people
- Community driven and focused outcomes
- Inclusive Community Connectedness
- Community wellbeing

### Drivers

- Focus on the BIG picture, delivered locally
- Defined lines of authority and role clarity
- Defined communication methods to meet community need

### Methods

- Community connection program defined and utilized
- Program principles and behaviors established at all levels
- Well established communications plan.

Community members have also clearly articulated priorities through a Recovery Survey Report commissioned by EMV on behalf of the Wye River and Separation Creek Recovery Group which was formed in the initial recovery.

This survey helped identify a range of matters that members of the community considered important including nine potential projects that could be undertaken over the medium term.

| Project  | Preference Score |
|--|------------------|
| Developing a plan to control the regrowth of weeds on both public and private land                                       | 689              |
| Beautifying Paddy's Path with indigenous plants and sculptures   | 626              |
| Underground power-lines in areas where feasible, such as the town centre   | 614              |
| Organising with local plant nurseries to supply subsidised indigenous plants to all property owners affected by the fire | 609              |
| Improve access and facilities for the beach at Wye River and Separation Creek  | 568              |
| Replanting Harrington Park with indigenous plants  | 558              |
| Access to courses on emergency management for all our volunteers   | 495              |
| Additional walks through the bush marked out and maintained  | 491              |
| New community noticeboards for Wye River and Separation Creek  | 361              |

More information is available within this interim plan at 3.8 and in Attachment 1 but it is important to note the community's early priorities as a guide. The full Recovery Survey Report will be available on Wye Sep Connect.

### 2.1. Early Recovery Governance

The Wye River Separation Creek fire was managed by the Incident Management Team based at Colac with a field fire ground structure established. The IMT was supported at Region and State level.

Relief and Recovery Teams were activated on 25 December 2015 while response was still in its early stages. These teams provided assistance to evacuees with registration, financial assistance, material aid, personal support and shelter.

The Wye River Separation Creek Fire Recovery Committee was established specific to the Wye River Separation Creek fire incident. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Regional Recovery Coordinator facilitated the Committee, with the first meeting taking place on 27 December 2015.

Additionally, the Wye River and Separation Creek Recovery Group (WSRG) was formed in early January 2016 in response to a request from the Emergency Management Commissioner. WSRG was asked to advise on recovery issues in the days and weeks following the Christmas Day fires. WSRG was formed with representation from major services groups, businesses and property owners in the community and subsequently was replaced by the Community Resilience Committee.

## **2.2. Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement Governance Framework**

Subsequent to the formation of the Wye River Separation Creek Fire Recovery Committee, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) took steps to re-organise the State's management of recovery by establishing a new governance framework.

In order to meet the challenges facing the local communities of Wye River and Separation Creek, EMV and Colac Otway Shire Council has drafted a single plan – the Wye River Separation Creek Initial Resettlement Plan - to deliver a:

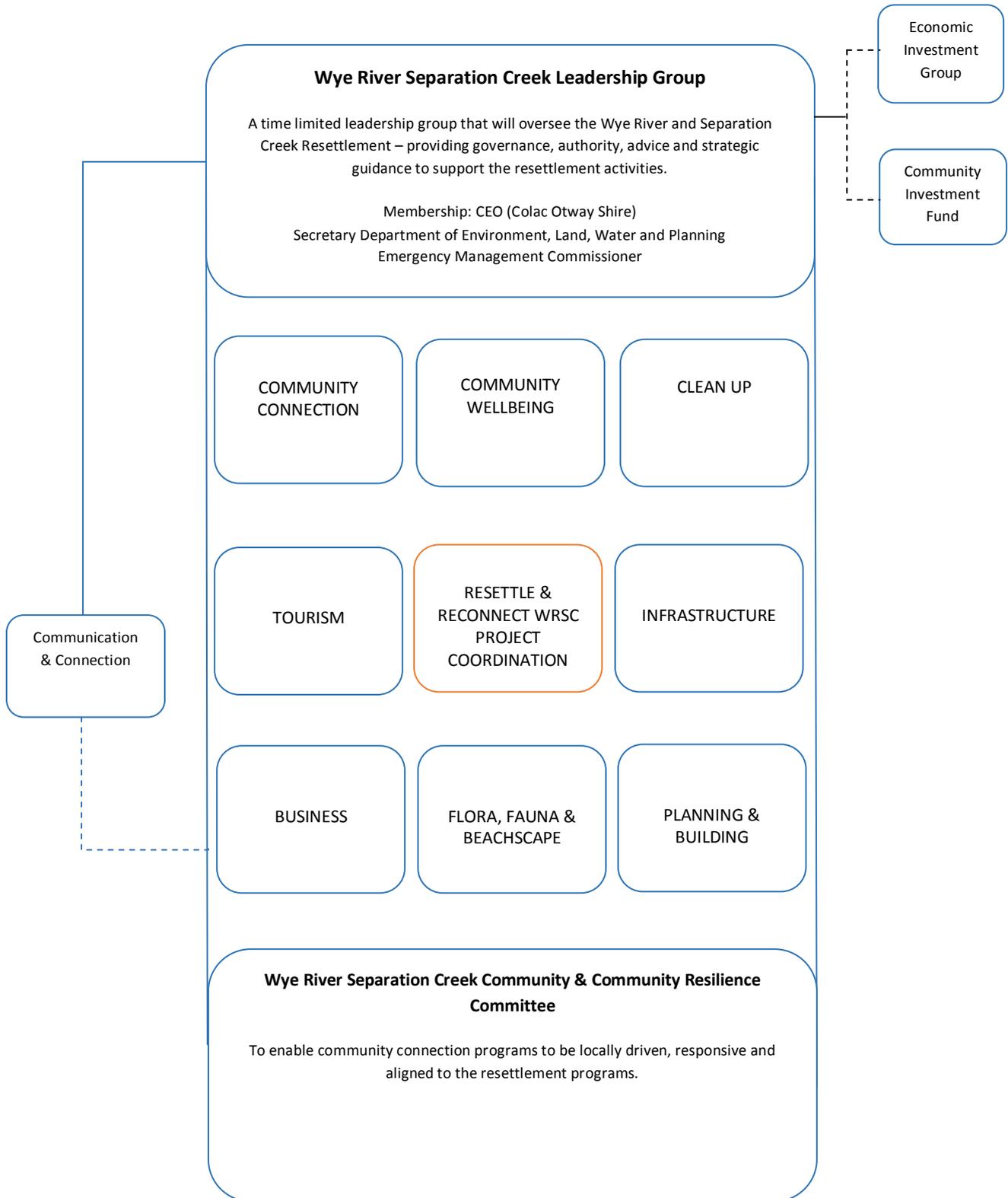
- community connected recovery plan with a key focus on community wellbeing;
- coordinated clean up making efficient use of State resources and safely expediting the process of clearing properties of bushfire waste;
- comprehensive plan to repair/re-establish local government and crown land infrastructure;
- streamlined planning and building process for owners wishing to re-establish their properties;
- plan to deliver works to manage threats posed to Flora, Fauna and Beachscape engaging the community;
- connected plan to support the recovery of business and tourism in Wye River and Separation Creek, and surrounds affected by the bushfire.

## **2.3. Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement Delivery Framework**

The establishment of the Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement Framework will enable the current recovery processes to transition to long term community resilience.

Supported by State Government, local government, organisations, businesses, the local community, the Wye River Separation Creek Community Resilience Committee and a range of other organisations, this structure will help facilitate the reconnection and resettlement of Wye River and Separation Creek.

**Figure 4:** Governance structure Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement



## 2.4. Delivery Framework Governance

### 2.4.1. WRSC Resettlement Leadership Group

Comprising of Chief Executive Officer Colac Otway Shire, Sue Wilkinson, Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley and the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Adam Fennessy, the Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement Leadership Group will oversee the implementation of the Resettlement Plan including:

- Development and implementation of the WRSC Delivery Framework that reflects the State and Local level partnership approach to resettlement.
- Oversight of the Wye River and Separation Creek resettlement process providing:
  - Advice and strategic guidance;
  - A mechanism for joint decision making between the agencies (to ensure efficiencies).
- Facilitating and overseeing the implementation of the Resettlement Plan including oversight of all aspects of the work required to assist the recovery and resettlement of the community from the impact of the fires.
- Prepare reports to the State and Commonwealth governments with recommendations for resources and actions needed to assist with resettlement activities.
- Direct allocation of State resources to facilitate the successful delivery of the Resettlement Plan.
- Oversight of communications and engagement activities to ensure a co-ordinated approach across all agencies.
- Resolution of issues or conflicts, as required, which may arise during the delivery of the Resettlement Plan.

Fundamental to the resettlement of WRSC will be the involvement of the local community in driving the process of recovery over the long term. The role of the Wye River Separation Creek Community Resilience Committee is to inform and champion community based recovery.

### 2.4.2. WRSC Resettlement Project Co-ordination Group.

The WRSC Resettlement Framework identifies eight project streams as key to the resettlement and reconnection of Wye River and Separations Creek. The Project Coordination Group is the team that will be responsible individually and collectively for the delivery of the WRSC Initial Resettlement Plan.

Accordingly this plan outlines:

- The scope and deliverables;
- Constraints and opportunities;
- Responsibility for delivery of each focus area/delivery stream;
- Timeframes as appropriate for each action.

The eight delivery streams are outlined below:

- **Community Connection:** Support the WRSC communities to successfully deal with the impacts of the fire by engaging and consulting with community members to facilitate connectivity, capacity building and enhance community resilience.
- **Community Wellbeing:** Recovery services that assist fire affected individuals and communities to manage the personal, psychosocial and financial impacts of the fire.

- **Clean up:** A coordinated clean up process to ensure public safety, efficient use of resources, consistency of approach and the minimisation of environmental impacts to facilitate the timely return to normality for the township.
- **Infrastructure:** A comprehensive plan to repair/re-establish local government and crown land infrastructure such as roads, drains, pavements (sealed & unsealed), roadside & street furniture (e.g. signage), community infrastructure, power supply and television transmission.
- **Planning and Building:** Provision of streamlined planning process for fire-affected properties in WRSC by the State Government and COS – ensuring new dwellings are more resilient to bushfires, minimising the risks of erosion and contributing to a sense of place.
- **Flora, Fauna and Beachscape:** Public land infrastructure remediation to support enjoyment of the coast beachscape through the projects such as beachscape and public lands (Paddys Path, playground, foreshore camping reserve etc), emergency stabilisation works (public and private lands impacted by suppression efforts), weed management works.
- **Business & Tourism (Combined):** Identification of the economic impacts and consequences of the fire to inform the regional planning and delivery of economic recovery activities in response.

The WRSC Initial Resettlement Plan is a public document and will be available to the community via the WyeSep Connect Portal.

The Initial Plan will also be updated at regular stages to reflect its evolution from the immediate recovery tasks (such as initial relief support, public safety and clean up) through the development of streamlined planning controls and to the repair of infrastructure, all in order to enable the community to reconnect and re-establish.

### 2.4.3. The Community Resilience Committee and the Plan

The specific functions of the Committee are to:

- Inform the development of Resettlement Project Plans that identify all actions necessary to ensure recovery is undertaken in a systematic, effective and timely manner;
- Provide comment on the implementation of the Resettlement Project Plans;
- Receive regular reports on the progress and on-going developments arising through the resettlement process;
- Ensure actions are flexible and responsive to emerging community needs, trends and relevant issues;
- Highlight areas of need for any additional resources or actions to assist with recovery across all areas;
- Inform the community of progress on recovery and major initiatives and achievements.

## 3. RESETTLEMENT PLANS BY STREAM

### 3.1. COMMUNITY CONNECTION

#### Purpose

To support the Wye River, Separation Creek (WRSC) communities to successfully deal with the impacts of the fire that occurred on 25 December 2015 by engaging and consulting with community members to facilitate connectivity, capacity building and enhance community resilience based on the following relief and recovery principles:

- Empower, engage and consult with individuals and communities to promote self-sufficiency and, where possible, meet their own relief and recovery needs.

- Be coordinated and collaborative, jointly owned by affected individuals and communities-as well as the non-government organisations, businesses and government agencies that support them.
- Be adaptive and scalable, recognising the unique, complex and dynamic nature of emergencies and communities.
- Focus on consequence management, where everyone involved appreciates the potential consequence of their decisions and actions.
- Be able to support the delivery of concurrent community, local, regional and state response, relief and recovery activities.

## Scope

Community based recovery activities will be led by two Bushfire Community Recovery Officers from the Colac Otway Shire funded by DHHS:

- The Coordinator will engage and liaise with representatives from regional and municipal recovery services to ensure the effective functioning of community focussed development programs and activities and provide support to the Municipal Recovery functions including the provision of case support, counselling and other personal support services.
- The Community Development Officer will facilitate recovery activities through comprehensive engagement activities with community representatives and organisations.

Communications will be delivered through a structure developed by EMV, with a communications working group comprised of Colac Otway Shire, DHHS, DELWP, DEDJTR and various contractors and agencies. The working group is supported by consultancy firm Porter Novelli.

- Working as a group the various departments, agencies and contractors will ensure integration and alignment of information, events, and engagement activities and oversee the development of content for communication channels.
- The communications group will work closely with Community Resilience Community, and ensure opportunities and scope for community input, including content development, two-way forums and conversations through the community resources of the website and facebook page. A structure and timeline will be developed for the hand-over of key communication channels to the community.

## Delivery Responsibility – Lead by Colac Otway Shire

DHHS / COS / CRC:

- DHHS have funded the establishment the Colac Otway Shire to deliver a range of recovery services through a Coordinator Bushfire Recovery and a Community Development Officer - DHHS will also provide program management guidance and expertise as required to assist the delivery of recovery program objectives.
- COS to recruit a Coordinator Bushfire Recovery and a Community Development Officer
- Community Resilience Committee will provide a mechanism for communicating with and receiving information from fire affected communities. The CRC will inform communities and stakeholders about the progress of Recovery Action Plans, and gain feedback through members' networks, contacts and associated organisations; this is integral to providing and facilitating valuable knowledge on local issues and initiatives and generating creative ideas and solutions to assist community recovery.

Communication group and CRC:

- EMV, supported by COS, have developed a community specific website and facebook page, which complement other communication channels such as meetings, newsletters, one-on-one conversations, community engagement opportunities and events. The website and facebook page are the key sources of factual and community based information for community members. The ultimate aim is for it to develop as a two-way community communication channel and will require strong partnerships.

- The communications group will work collectively, along with the CRC, to ensure relevant and timely information is provided to the community, and more importantly, allows for two-way community facilitated conversations. The group structure and communication channels complement the Governance Structure and Initial Resettlement Plan goals to ensure all information is up-to-date, easily sourced and through a single channel.

### Project Deliverables and Beneficiaries

- Recovery planning and activities that meet community needs – as identified through consultation and gaps analysis.
- Community access to recovery information from all service providers and across all recovery environments.
- Opportunities for community to develop content and engage with each other, and the various resettlement bodies, through the website and facebook page.
- Relevant and established linkages and pathways with relevant personal support services, community health, family and vulnerable community services.
- Provision of effective support to community groups assisting with local recovery activities.
- Delivery of collaborative community events and activities within a community engagement model that support and encourage individual and community reliance and empowerment.

### Dependencies / Constraints

The Colac Otway Shire will work collaboratively with DHHS, recovery partners and the community to facilitate the reconnection and strengthening of community networks, building resilience and supporting a program of community based events and projects.

The communications group will work collaboratively and with the CRC to ensure communications are timely, respond to community enquiries and concern and provide an open location for two-way conversations.

## 3.2. COMMUNITY WELLBEING

### Purpose

To empower and support the (WRSC) communities to restore and rebuild community functioning and resilience and support fire affected individuals to manage the personal, psychosocial and financial impacts and enhance their wellbeing while they pursue their recovery.

### Scope

DHHS to deliver/facilitate the following:

- Assist fire affected individuals and communities to manage the personal, psychosocial and financial impacts of the fires.
- Build resilience, promote the reconnection and strengthening of community networks by supporting a program of community based events and projects.
- Ensure the Wye River Separation Creek residents who lost their principal place of residence have access to appropriate short and long term housing options.
- Ensure public health infrastructure is supported in the fire affected areas.

Colac Otway Shire (COS), Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) and recovery partners will work with the community to:

- assist the reconnection and strengthening of community networks, build resilience and support a program of community based events and projects.
- ensure the Wye River Separation Creek residents who lost their principal place of residence have access to appropriate short and long term housing options.
- directly assist fire affected individuals and communities manage the personal, psychosocial and financial impacts of the fires.

## Project Deliverables and Beneficiaries

- Community based projects and events aimed at enhancing and re-establishing community connection and resilience.
- Ensure access to accommodation and transition to permanent housing for those whose principal place of residence is destroyed.
- Support immediate financial needs and facilitate support for long term financial recovery, including issues around insurance and welfare.
- Facilitate material aid support to fire affected residents.
- Screen and assess needs for personal support, counselling and more intensive support and refer to appropriate services.
- To develop sector capacity and implement supports to service providers.
- Ensure accurate information and advice relating to public health.

## Dependencies / Constraints

The Community Wellbeing Project Plan is linked to the Community Connection Project Plan.

## Delivery Responsibility – Lead by DHHS

Colac Otway Shire recovery team will be supported by the Department of Health & Human Services and other recovery partners to:

- Deliver the actions identified in the Community Wellbeing Plan;
- Support the Wye River-Separation Creek Community Resilience Committee;
- Identify and refer individuals and groups to relevant services;
- Undertake locally driven recovery activities that meet community need.

DHHS:

- Develop sector capability and enhance the capacity of local service providers;
- Psychosocial recovery sessions to affected communities and those supporting the community.

Recovery Agencies

- Support the community wellbeing activities and staff training as required.

## 3.3. CLEAN UP

### Purpose

The scale of the fire damage in Wye River and Separation Creek together with the terrain and location on the Great Ocean Road has resulted in the State Government directing a coordinated clean up process to ensure public safety, efficient use of resources, consistency of approach and the minimisation of environmental impacts to facilitate the timely return to normality for the townships.

### Scope

Two phases to the clean up – the safety phase and the works phase:

The safety phase includes assessing and compiling the details of damaged properties; assessing and removing fire damaged trees; assessing roads and other critical infrastructure to make safe and/or remove and replace (water, electricity etc). This phase has also included the temporary closure of roads to prevent/limit access during the safety phase for the safety of owners, the general public and to allow safety phase works to progress unhindered.

The works phase includes assessing the sites; establishing base line air quality and monitoring air quality, particularly in relation to asbestos; agreeing landfill locations with the EPA; developing and gaining approval of works methodologies and plans (in particular the handling and transportation of dangerous goods) by Worksafe; engaging suitable sub-contractors, promoting the use of local labour as much as possible; Liaising with all stakeholders; securing properties with respect to safety, health and environment issues; facilitating access and traffic management; cleaning up and disposing of bushfire waste while preserving items that property owners and insurers see as relevant to the site's redevelopment; and providing progress and information reports to the State Government.

The clean up works are scheduled to be completed by 30 June 2016 (subject to weather conditions).

### Project Deliverables and Beneficiaries

At the conclusion of the clean up works:

- Owners will have their bushfire affected properties cleared of rubble, dangerous trees, ash, hazardous materials and the like.
- Owners will be provided the opportunity to nominate elements that they wish to retain and re-use.
- An environmental certificate will also be provided on completion of the works certifying the removal of bushfire hazards in the clean up process.

### Dependencies / Constraints

- Approval of landfill sites to receive bushfire waste (Section 30A to be issued by EPA).
- Dangerous Goods Order to regulate the safe handling and transportation of bushfire waste.
- Registration of owners to participate in the consolidated clean up scheme, which will allow Grocon to scope the total works and finalise the works methodology, logistics and cost plan.
- Approval (by EMV/MPV) of the scope(s) of work consistent with bushfire clean up tasks prior to works proceeding.
- Consent of the insurers to contribute the first \$25,000 of the clean up costs per property.

### Delivery Responsibility – Lead by EMV (Contractor Grocon)

Grocon:

- Scoping of clean up on individual (in consultation with insurers/owners) properties.
- Clean up works including air monitoring during works phase, removal of bushfire material and transportation to approved landfill for safe disposal.

Emergency Management Victoria (assisted by Major Projects Victoria):

- Contract Administrator of the Grocon clean up contract.
- Working with insurance companies to facilitate approvals and funds.

Colac Otway Shire :

- Assessment of roads and other geotechnical data to facilitate safe access/agrees during clean up works.
- Approval of traffic management arrangements for local roads during the clean-up.
- Ensure road infrastructure returned to pre clean-up condition by Grocon/State Government.
- Manage the orderly and safe clean-up of sites where owners opt out of the Grocon clean-up through the issue of Building Orders where necessary.
- Assist DELWP to manage public access to the bushfire affected areas to ensure hazards do not compromise public safety, including the issue of building notices/orders for sites which experienced damage from the fire and advice to owners restoring septic tanks and other infrastructure.

DELWP:

- In conjunction with Colac Otway Shire manage the temporary fence.
- Coordination of safe removal of burnt and damaged trees.

## 3.4. INFRASTRUCTURE

### Purpose

To repair or restore local infrastructure and other assets in WRSC which have been impacted by the bushfire. This is to reduce risks to safety, to facilitate the clean-up operations, and to assist the community to restore their homes in a timely manner.

This relates to public or privately administered assets including:

- Roads and related infrastructure;
- Retaining structures;
- Drainage infrastructure;

- Open space infrastructure such as pathways, fencing, park furniture, etc.;
- Utility infrastructure including power and telecommunications;
- Waste bins.

## Scope

Two phases to the rebuilding of infrastructure assets – emergency protection works phase and the infrastructure restoration phase.

The emergency protection phase includes a number of high-priority actions to reduce threat to life, property, and the environment. This incorporates making detailed assessments of roads and other infrastructure to make them safe, to enable access by the various agencies involved in recovery and clean-up and to allow the public to return to their properties. Some temporary works were required to allow safe access by heavy vehicles involved in the clean-up. Other damaged utility infrastructure will also be repaired to restore basic services. Hazardous trees that posed a risk to road users have also been assessed and removed to mitigate any risk to life or property. Other essential works involving the clearing of roadside debris and reinstatement of important drainage infrastructure has also been undertaken during this phase.

The infrastructure restoration phase includes the rebuilding of assets which have either been directly affected by the bushfire or have deteriorated in condition due to firefighting activities or other tasks associated with the clean-up operations. The types of assets that have been affected include: roads; street furniture such as signs, guideposts and guardrail; retaining structures; drainage infrastructure; and other open space assets such as park furniture, fencing, and access paths. Other utility infrastructure will also need to be replaced or repaired to reinstate services such as electricity and telecommunications to properties in the fire affected areas. During the clean-up; roads and other related infrastructure will be monitored and maintained in a safe and passable state of repair for all vehicles. The rehabilitation of damaged roads will be undertaken in coordination with the completion of the clean-up activities.

## Project Deliverables and Beneficiaries

At the conclusion of the infrastructure restoration phase:

- Risks to life, property, and the environment will be mitigated.
- Public and other utility assets will be rehabilitated to an acceptable condition.
- Essential services and access will be restored to owner's properties.

## Dependencies / Constraints

- The timing of the rehabilitation works and other related infrastructure will be subject to the completion timeframes associated with clean-up operations.
- Provision of a confirmed safe working environment to allow various responsible bodies to return to fire affected areas to repair/restore assets under their control.
- A determination on the responsibility for repairing/replacing privately built infrastructure (i.e. retaining walls) within road reserves is required.
- Availability of contractors who are adequately experienced and resourced to deliver the required asset restoration works.
- Re-establishment of road boundaries to clarify responsibility for asset restoration required.
- The primary objective is to restore assets or services to a condition to which existed prior to the bushfires. Any betterment or enhancement works will be subject to securing alternative funding sources or approvals.

## Delivery Responsibility – lead by COS

Grocon:

- Monitoring and maintenance of roads being used during the clean-up so that they are in a safe and passable condition.

- Provision of temporary works to allow safe access by heavy vehicles being used as part of the clean-up.
- Restoration of roads which may be damaged during the clean-up operations.

Emergency Management Victoria (assisted by Major Projects Victoria):

- Contract Administrator of the Grocon clean-up contract.

Colac Otway Shire:

- Assessment of roads and other geotechnical data to facilitate safe access/egress during clean up works.
- Urgent repair work as required.
- Preparation of a dilapidation report to record the condition of roads and related infrastructure prior to the commencement of the clean-up operations.
- Repair or replacement of assets on Council owned, managed or controlled land such as paths, park furniture, etc.
- Coordination of the replacement of waste bins damaged by the fire.
- Work with TX Australia to replace the destroyed equipment shelter located at the Bird Track television broadcast facility.
- Oversight of asset repair and restoration activities within the townships including liaison with other relevant agencies.

DELWP:

- Assessment and removal of hazardous trees.
- Coordination of the restoration of assets on Crown Land such as Paddy's Path.

Powercor

- Repair or replacement of electricity distribution related infrastructure to reinstate service.

Telstra

- Repair or replacement of telecommunications assets to restore service.

TX Australia

- Establishment of temporary facilities to provide for continued television broadcast into the townships.
- Permanent replacement of destroyed television broadcast equipment.

VicRoads

- Repair and restoration of assets on or relating to the Great Ocean Road.

### 3.5. PLANNING AND REBUILDING

#### Purpose

The State Government and Colac Otway Shire have streamlined the planning controls for fire-affected properties in WRSC. The controls came into effect on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 following its gazetting. These streamlined controls are designed to prioritise essential planning objectives and requirements while giving Council some discretion in the application of permit requirements. These controls give Colac Otway Shire CEO the authority to approve a planning permit application.

The State Government has undertaken a variety of bushfire, landscape capability, geotechnical and waste-water assessments to inform these streamlined controls and improve future building decisions in the

townships. The streamlined planning requirements consider the findings of these technical assessments and ensure new dwellings are more resilient to bushfires, whilst minimising the risks of erosion and contribute to the regions unique coastal character. These controls and technical assessments have been ‘packaged’ and distributed to property owners with individual assistance provided through a dedicated Planning and Building ‘one-stop-shop,’ operated by Council and other agencies.

## Scope

A number of technical studies have been completed to assist residents through the planning and building process – this includes the Bushfire risk (Bushfire Attack Level assessment) a Geotechnical assessment, a land-capability assessment and a study of waste-water management options and strategies.

Colac Otway Shire is providing individual assistance to residents through a planning and building one-stop-shop program operated by Colac Otway Shire across four locations.

### **Streamlined planning controls**

The streamlined planning controls are intended to ease low priority planning requirements to support fire affected residents through an accelerated planning and building process. Higher priority planning provisions and requirements will be retained in the incorporated document, to ensure that future dwellings are more resilient to bushfires, consider risks of erosion/landslip and contribute to a unique coastal character.

### **Bushfire risk assessments**

The State Government commissioned Terramatrix, a bushfire consultancy, to determine the bushfire risk — known as 'Bushfire Attack Levels' — in the affected settlements of WRSC. The established BAL reflects the shared responsibility of individual landowners in reducing bushfire risk to enhance community safety. Given the BAL assessment is included in the new streamlined planning controls, it is these BALs that will form the basis of Councils determination of any application lodged.

A Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment establishes the relevant requirements for the construction of buildings in a bushfire prone area under the Australian Standard (AS 3959-2009). The BAL is an assessment of bushfire risk measuring the severity of a building’s potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact. The BAL is expressed in terms of increments of radiant heat exposure and provides the basis for establishing the requirements for construction to improve the protection of building elements from attack by bushfires.

The different ‘risk’ levels in the BALs system depends on:

- Vegetation, which is the primary source of fuel for a bushfire; and
- Topography (or slope) which influences the rate of spread and intensity of a fire.

### **Geotechnical assessment**

The State Government commissioned Coffey Environments Australia to conduct a broad geotechnical assessment of the WRSC area. This assessment provides owners and designers with a preliminary assessment and advice to inform choice of dwelling style and type in response to the geotechnical risks and landscape constraints identified such as soil type, slope and depth to rock.

### **Land-capability assessment**

Coffey were also commissioned to provide a Land Capability assessment and to investigate various waste-water management systems suitable for the settlement. This assessment identifies building and development constraints including soil types, drainage lines, land slope, proximity to water bodies as well as other relevant landscape concerns. This will provide property owners, their designers, engineers, insurers and builders with preliminary advice and options to guide site specific responses to specific landscape constraints, for any particular dwelling design and associated structures.

The Government has also announced that Coffey will provide assistance to individual property owners through the ‘One Stop Shop’ service with lot specific geotechnical, landscape and waste water options. The Coffey report identifies applicable design standards and performance requirements and includes a review of

the available technology in domestic wastewater management, including cost estimates. This work has been undertaken to achieve optimal environmental, health and economic outcomes for the community at a settlement wide level and assist residents through the Planning and Building process.

### **One-stop-shop**

The 'one stop shop' is designed to provide residents with information relevant to their planning permit needs as simply as possible. The primary focus is on information relevant to the process of planning for, commissioning and undertaking a rebuild of mainly residential structures. Technical experts will be on hand to assist each resident. This includes planners, building surveyors and wastewater and geotechnical expertise from Coffey Environments.

DELWP is currently supporting Council at the One Stop Shop locations, including senior planning representative at the Melbourne location, and provision of contracted support into Council at Councils discretion, to support the operation of the Wye River location. COS is augmenting its staff to support the operation of the One Stop Shops.

### **Good design exhibition, Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA)**

The OVGA has advised that they are working towards staging an exhibition mid-year that will explore the difficulties of building on sites with complex topography, bushfire attack levels and unique coastal and soil conditions. The exhibition will emphasise the material components and construction elements that form the basis for good design in these conditions.

The exhibition will explore how building elements (floor, balcony, wall, door, window, ceiling, roof, fireplace, stairs etc.) might be designed with sensitivity and understanding of local issues including bushfire risk, topography and ecology.

### **Settlement survey datum points**

The Office of the Surveyor General has commissioned a local surveyor from Jan Juc to recover and record surviving ground survey marks and datum points on appropriate sites within Wye River and Separation Creek. These points will inform future surveying work being conducted by council and private landholders'. Individuals will be required to engage a licensed surveyor to re-establish their private property boundary as part of their planning permit application. Work is currently underway and is expected to be complete by 1 June 2016 or as permitted by access arrangements with Grocon Pty Ltd.

### **Project Deliverables and Beneficiaries:**

At the conclusion of the Planning and Building policy stage (By end of March 2016):

- Owners were sent a letter from COS on 1 April 2016 with specific information on their property, including a BAL rating to form part of their planning permit application, under the streamlined controls.
- The new streamlined planning controls will apply to owners with fire affected properties and are in effect from 4 April 2016. They are intended to reduce the processing time for planning permit applications, whilst ensuring that the relevant environmental, economic and community safety factors are considered, to ultimately make the community more resilient and responsive to change.
- Some properties may have two or three BALs established as part of the streamlined planning controls. The BAL that residents will be required to build to, will depend on the location/siting of the dwelling across the established BAL lines. Residents will need to consult Council, through the One Stop Shop, and their building surveyors to determine which Construction Standard they will need to build to subject to the Australian Standard (AS 3595-2009).
- DELWP, Council and a number of agencies have published the fact sheets, reports and supporting documents on the WyeSep Connect web page to support the individual property owners letter, including:
  - BAL level for each lot as determined by 2016 study
  - Copy of BAL study
  - Copy of Geotech report
  - Copy of Land Capability and Waste-water management report

- Planning and Building Fact sheets
- The OVGA will facilitate the expression of interest process, create the design guidelines and support the exhibition.
- The Surveyor General has commissioned a Local Surveyor to identify surviving ground survey marks and datum points on appropriate sites within Wye River and Separation Creek. This project will recover and record these surviving ground marks. Work is expected to be complete by 1 June 2016 or as permitted by access arrangements with Grocon Pty Ltd.

### Dependencies / Constraints:

#### Considerations for building:

- Steepness of land in general and across individual sites: the topography of Wye River and Separation Creek presents a number of issues. The slope makes accessing and assessing the individual lots difficult, whilst also creating a variety of landslip issues, which were identified as part of the Landscape Capability assessment.
- Vegetation classification and management: the vegetation within the region presents a bushfire risk if unmanaged, and a landslip and erosion risk if removed. The ongoing management of this vegetation will directly impact the planning and building process in the region.
- Designing the residential property to suit site shape and orientation (inc. footings): each lot is structured differently. Setback requirements and future building footprints/orientation is a key consideration for managing bushfire and environmental risk for the future settlement.
- Availability of builders and specialists: property owners choosing to build in the affected township will proceed at different times. The availability of local builders and specialists is uncertain, and may present a variety of issues.

#### Concerns:

- Building concerns: a number of residents have expressed concerns about the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment and the associated building requirements. Owners are concerned that the geotechnical requirements and high BAL rating precludes them from building due to increased building costs not covered by their insurer.
- The Community has expressed concern that an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) was not considered as part of the bushfire assessment. It has been noted that this APZ was considered however it was deemed to be unfeasible as it could not be managed in perpetuity and would present a landslip risk. Ongoing discussions are likely to occur regarding vegetation management and the APZ however these are unlikely to change construction standards within the settlement. Options remain for residents to reduce their BAL through siting and appropriate design response.
- OVGA exhibition concerns: the exhibition cannot promote expectations that houses can be “fireproof” or that the inherent risk associated with living in locations prone to bushfire attack can be eliminated. The threat of bushfire attack is one of the issues that will have informed exhibited built works, other issues will include functionality, user comfort, environmental impact, energy consumption, build cost, whole-of-life cost, qualities of space and form. The OVGA needs to establish clear deliverables and objectives of the exhibition as residents are beginning to consider design options, and are looking to the State Architect for advice.

In response to these concerns, the Emergency Management Commissioner has put together a panel of technical fire and building experts to review the bushfire risk management at Wye River and Separation Creek based on the existing regulatory and policy framework.

Additionally, work is under way around the consideration of an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) at Wye River and Separation Creek. This will evaluate the level and extent of fuel management required to look at different options from settlement-wide to individual sections and assess the feasibility and cost of construction for these different options, and any implications of the options on landslips and amenity.

### Delivery Responsibility – Lead by DELWP (Planning)

#### Coffey Environments Australia Pty Ltd:

- Assessment of geotechnical data and landscape.

- Develop a robust and comprehensive information base for geotechnical, land capability and wastewater management issues that will support a regulatory framework that Council can apply to individuals lots in a streamlined manner to facilitate timely approvals to repair or build in the fire affected township.
- Assist applicants with pre-lodgement questions, for example, to assist with determining optimum or preferred building location on the site and other siting and design issues.
- Waste-water management recommendations DELWP Water and Catchments to coordinate.

**Terramatrix:**

- Settlement wide, lot specific, Bushfire Attack Level assessment.
- Assessment of the effect of vegetation classification and management scenarios.

**Colac Otway Shire:**

- Assisting landowners in compiling relevant information for future planning permits under the streamlined controls.
- Assisting in the strategic development of the streamlined planning controls.
- Implementation of the streamlined planning controls and assessment of future planning permit applications.
- Distribution of a consolidated information pack by Council, who will be assisted by DELWP and contracted support from TRACT planning consultancy

**DELWP (Planning Systems):**

- document streamlined planning controls (Incorporated document).
- Coordinate the technical assessments (BAL Assessment).
- assist Colac Otway Shire implement the relevant Planning & Building regulations and controls.
- create the Planning & Building regulatory framework that will be implemented.
- staff the one-stop-shop and provide additional resources to Council
- Consideration of an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) at Wye River and Separation Creek

**Emergency Management Victoria**

- Assembly of an expert panel to review the bushfire risk management at Wye River and Separation Creek based on the existing regulatory and policy framework

**OVGA (Office of the Victorian Government Architect):**

- To stage an exhibition to demonstrate the benefits of good design in landscapes with the characteristics of Wye River and Separation Creek, to building a better, more resilient community.

**Surveyor General**

- To engage a licensed local surveyor to identify surviving ground survey marks and datum points on appropriate sites within WRSC.

### **3.6. FLORA AND FAUNA, BEACHSCAPE**

#### **Purpose**

The Flora, Fauna and Beachscape program will deliver works to manage threats posed to flora and fauna within the fire affected areas and address broader landscape-scale environmental impacts arising from the Wye River – Jamieson Track fire suppression effort. Following the fire, the following environmental issues were identified, requiring remediation or monitoring works:

- Waterway health;
- Environmental restoration;
- Air quality, waste and pollution management;
- Weed management;
- Vegetation loss and erosion.

The program will also deliver public land infrastructure remediation works to support continued enjoyment of the coast and beachscape, and to support public land managers in managing coastal public land infrastructure.

The WRSC Recovery Group also undertook a community survey to obtain input from Wye River and Separation Creek community regarding priorities for future projects that would benefit the community. The results of this survey has been provided to the Community Resilience Committee and other government departments to ensure community voices are heard, and reflected, in the projects undertaken as part of WRSC recovery. This survey identified protecting the environment as being of highest priority. The projects identified in the Flora, Fauna and Beachscape work program address many priorities identified by the community for providing whole-community benefit. In addition to reflecting the views of the community obtained through this survey, the community will continue to be engaged throughout the program to inform development and delivery of individual projects. Community input and involvement is critical to achieving successful outcomes in the projects included within this program.

## Scope

This program of works primarily relates to work to be undertaken on public lands managed by the State Government through DELWP or its public land managers, including Parks Victoria and the Otway Coast Committee of Management (OCCoM).

This program of works includes some project work to be undertaken on private land, comprising rehabilitation of control lines created on private land as part of the fire suppression effort and weed management works undertaken as part of a Colac Otway Shire-led project.

Community engagement is being undertaken as part of the Committee of Management Projects (extraction pipe and pump project, Paddy's Path reinstatement, foreshore walking track establishment, playground upgrade, and Wye River foreshore Camping Reserve projects).

Projects that will be delivered in the Flora, Fauna and Beachscape program are:

- Beachscape and public lands:
  - Wye River Extraction Pipe and Pump Project (reinstatement of water supply with appropriate governance arrangements)
  - Paddy's Path Reinstatement
  - Wye River Playground Upgrade
  - Wye River Foreshore Walking Track Establishment
  - Wye River Foreshore Camping Reserve projects:
    - managers office upgrade
    - camp kitchen upgrade
    - septic system decommissioning
  - Emergency Stabilisation Works (public and private lands impacted by suppression efforts), including assessment of aboriginal cultural heritage values
- Flora
  - Weed management works on private land and public / private interface land, including planning and coordination
- Fauna
  - Wildlife welfare services for injured wildlife – relief activity

There are a number of priorities identified in the WRSC community survey as being important issues for benefitting the entire community, which are most appropriately progressed in other work programs outside of Flora, Fauna and Beachscape. These include replacement of power line infrastructure, management of tree risks (outside of public land), and erosion protection in the township (beyond what has been done as part of emergency stabilisation works here).

## Project Deliverables and Beneficiaries

### A. Crown Land Reserve Recovery Projects (Committee of Management Projects)

**Wye River Extraction Pipe and Pump Project**

- replace water supply infrastructure at Wye River foreshore damaged during fire suppression efforts (pump)
- identify a more sustainable water supply system for the OCCoM managing the existing pump, which may involve one or more pumps or alternative methods, that meets needs of the OCCoM and water supply beneficiaries and promotes water security planning
- establish a sustainable governance arrangement for the water supply system delivered as part of this project

**Paddy's Path reinstatement**

- reinstate and reopen Paddy's Path, which is the main pedestrian link between Wye River and Separation Creek, by ensuring it is safe for public use and access.
- As part of this, a geotechnical assessment of the path, clean up of the path headland, and dangerous trees assessment and mitigation works at Paddy's Path will be undertaken. Works will be undertaken to mitigate geotechnical risks identified.

**Wye River playground upgrade**

- upgrade the current playground infrastructure at Wye River, managed by Otway Coast CoM, to meet community expectations and current standards

**Wye River walking track establishment**

DELWP has been working with the Wye River Separation Creek Progress Association, Colac Otway Shire, Otway Coast Committee and Corangamite Catchment Management Authority as part of the working group for this project:

- Improve public access to public land along Wye River by formalising a popular walking area and creating a continuous walking track along Wye River.
- Implement engineering solutions around the river bank to minimise erosion alongside the proposed path location, to ensure that public space is retained and not eroded further.
- While project deliverables are being finalised with the community, known deliverables include a continuous walking path traversing the Big 4 Caravan park for public use and access along Wye River, infrastructure to demarcate the path, approvals to undertake the works, and an engineering solution along the river bank to minimise erosion.

**Wye River Foreshore Camping Reserve – managers office and camp kitchen upgrade**

- manage risk and improve service delivery and amenity at Wye River Foreshore Caravan Park by replacing the existing dilapidated manager's office; the dilapidated camp kitchen facilities; decommission damaged, old, and disused infrastructure at Wye River by decommissioning the disused septic tank at Wye River foreshore caravan park

**B. Emergency Stabilisation Works**

Rehabilitate public and private land impacted by fire suppression efforts, and manage risks posed by the fire event, as well as mitigate impacts of fire suppression efforts, to land managed by DELWP and Parks Victoria. This work will also include assessment of cultural heritage values and engagement with Traditional Owner Groups to ensure works are undertaken appropriately in sensitive areas:

- Rehabilitation on public land (land managed by DELWP and Parks Victoria) and rehabilitation of control lines created on private land (approximately 22 km) as part of fire suppression efforts.

**C. Weed management works**

- Manage environmental threats of weeds which establish in recently burnt or cleared areas in WRSC, particularly within the townships and in interface areas (between private and public land);
- As part of this project, a weed management plan will be developed, identifying short, medium and long term actions, and works will be undertaken to physically manage weeds in affected areas;
- The scale of works will depend on funding confirmation, which is being sought;

### Completed works:

#### **D. Wildlife welfare (relief activity):**

The impact of the fire on the natural environment, flora and fauna has been significant. Wildlife assessment and triage has been managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and supported by Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. Immediately following the fire, a wildlife triage station was established in Lorne, with veterinarians to assess and treat wildlife.

### Dependencies / Constraints

#### Dependencies

- Interface with clean up activities (e.g. site clearance, access, scopes of work):
  - Fencing
  - Paddy's Path reinstatement
  - Wye River Foreshore Camping Reserve infrastructure upgrades.
- Progress and delivery of technical reports undertaken through Planning and Building work program to inform policy and future building regulation.
- Outcomes and conclusion of community engagement activities.

#### Constraints

- Availability of funding to support weed management works, Wye River Walk Establishment additional scope, and confirmation of funding available for playground upgrade.

### Delivery Responsibility – lead by DELWP

#### **Colac Otway Shire:**

- Lead for coordination and implementation for works and projects on private land (excluding completion of emergency stabilisation works to mitigate damage from fire suppression efforts on private land).
- Primary support for Weeds Consultative Committee.

#### **DELWP:**

- Lead for completion and coordination of emergency stabilisation works on public land and on private land, to mitigate impacts of fire suppression efforts.
- Lead for management of Committee of Management projects (Crown land reserve recovery projects).
- Oversight of Otway Coast Committee of Management, as a land manager appointed under the *Crown Land Reserves Act 1978*.

#### **Parks Victoria:**

- Land manager of Great Otway National Park.

#### **Otway Coast Committee of Management:**

- Land manager for Crown land reserves in Wye River, including Wye River Foreshore Caravan Park, and landlord for Big 4 Caravan Park in Wye River.
- Delivery of Crown land reserve recovery projects, with lead from DELWP.

#### **Corangamite Catchment Management Authority:**

- Provider of specialist catchment, land and water planning advice.
- Coordinator of community network programs relating to volunteer land and weed management.
- Support for community programs to undertake weed management projects.
- Waterway manager.

#### **Barwon Water**

- Provider of specialist water management advice.

## 3.7. BUSINESS & TOURISM

### Purpose

The purpose of the economic recovery planning undertaken is to identify the economic impacts and consequences of the fire and to inform the regional planning and delivery of economic recovery activities in response.

The economic consequences may affect individuals and households, small and large businesses, industries, tourism and the broader economy. Early consideration of the economic consequences of an emergency is critical for community recovery. Information on the economic impact of emergencies may also assist in determining priority actions under other recovery environments, including the restoration of critical economic infrastructure within the built environment.

### Scope

In consideration of the identified impacts and consequences identified and to ensure that activities are “based on an assessment of impacts and consequences and linked to recovery needs”, the recovery activities included in this plan will meet one or more of the following objectives:

- Restore public/visitor confidence in the region
- Create opportunities to increase visitation in the shoulder and off peak seasons
- Maintain high visitation during peak season
- Increase visitor yield and repeat visitation
- Support business continuity and confidence
- Grow longer term economic and community resilience
- Encourage the rebuild of accommodation stock in WRSC.

In addition to current business support activities, targeted business engagement activities by Council and Regional Development Victoria resources are being undertaken to understand initial and potential future impacts and needs of the business community.

### Project Deliverables and Beneficiaries

In addition to current business support activities, targeted business engagement activities by Council’s and RDV resources are being undertaken to understand initial and potential future impacts and needs of the business community.

Current and Post-fire recovery initiatives are being grouped under the following categories:

- Tourism Marketing / Industry Development
- Event encouraging visitation & community well-being
- Small infrastructure project enhancing community and visitor experience
- Local promotional activities
- Other economic activation.

### Dependencies / Constraints

#### Impacts and consequences

The Great Ocean Road region takes in the geographical area from Torquay to the South Australian border, including the local government areas of Colac Otway, Corangamite, Moyne, Warrnambool, Glenelg and the Surf Coast. The tourism industry is a significant economic driver for the region. In 2013-14, the tourism industry contributed an estimated \$1.9 billion to the Great Ocean Road economy (10.8% of gross regional product) and employed approximately 20,700 people (12.0% of regional employment).

Additionally, the region plays a vital role in Victoria’s tourism performance, capturing more domestic and international visitors than any other tourism region in regional Victoria and supplying the second highest contribution to Victoria’s tourism gross regional product, ranking only behind Melbourne. For instance, forty-nine per cent of all international overnight visitors to regional Victoria visit the Great Ocean Road region and nearly half of the State’s licenced tour operators are licenced to operate in the Great Otway National Park, of which a majority are coach/bus operators.

Importantly, the summer months represent over a third of the annual domestic overnight visitation to the region.

## Impacts

### Reduced Visitation

An immediate and key impact of the fire and Road closure has been reduced visitation to the region. A number of measures to demonstrate reduced visitation have been identified, including:

- walk in visitors to the Lorne Visitor Information Centre declined by nearly one quarter (22%), as compared to the same period in 2014-15.
- total water usage in Apollo Bay between 25 December and 7 January declined seven per cent (7%).

## Consequences

### Loss of Revenue and bookings

Surveys undertaken by Tourism Victoria in conjunction with Great Ocean Road Tourism indicate that businesses were directly and indirectly affected within the immediate fire affected area and the broader region during the survey period (25 December 2015 to 5 January 2016), specifically:

- 27% of businesses surveyed were unable to trade at times between 25 December 2015 and 5 January 2016.
- 59% of businesses had a decline in revenue during the survey period; and
- 55% of business reported a decline in forward bookings during the survey period.

Some businesses experienced an increase in revenue (8%) and forward bookings (4%).

The overall impact on revenue of the Wye River fire for the 25 December 2015 and 5 January 2016 period is estimated to be a \$12.0 million decline, with affected businesses experiencing an average of 30% decline in revenue compared to the same period last year. This represents an estimated 1% of the total \$1,168 million annual tourism expenditure in the Great Ocean Road region.

### Employment

Further results indicate staffing levels and hours remained consistent for the majority of businesses (73% and 64% respectively), when comparing the 12 day period (25 December 2015 to 5 January 2016) to the same time last year. Twenty three per cent (23%) reported a decline in staffing levels and 30% of in staffing hours.

### Loss of Accommodation Stock in Wye River and Separation Creek

Many of 109 properties destroyed in Wye River and Separation Creek area were holiday homes. Businesses and individuals servicing these properties have been adversely impacted by this loss of accommodation stock, mainly through loss of rental revenue, ancillary services (i.e. cleaning) and local retail sales. This impact may be sustained into the long term.

## Potential Future Consequences

### Reduced of forward bookings and revenue

The GORRT survey results indicate, that, in addition to the impacts during the time of the Road Closure, advance bookings for the next three months following were estimated to be down by 37% compared to the same period in the previous year. Should this reduction be realised, it would represent an estimated \$73.1 million decrease in spending to the region and approximately 6% of annual tourism expenditure in the region. e summer months represent over a third of the annual domestic overnight visitation to the region.

## Delivery Responsibility – Lead by Regional Development Victoria

Short term actions are in two categories:

1. The first group of initiatives included Events Support – \$50,000 has been provided by Government for this purpose and approved by the Economic Sub- committee. Approval from the Minister for Regional Development to acquit these funds has been finalised.
2. \$50k will be made available to both Surf Coast Shire and Colac Otway Shire in support of three festivals.

- a. Surf Coast Shire- Lorne Sculpture Biennale (\$35k)
- b. Colac Otway Shire - Apollo Bay Seafood Festival (\$10k)
- c. Colac Otway Shire - Wye River Trivia & Music/Band night (\$5k)

The second group of projects /actions recommended by the Economic Sub- committee, this has also been approved by the Minister for Regional Development. An application was submitted from the Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism (GORRT) Board on behalf of its membership and the two affected Councils to the \$1 Million Economic and Community Fund to fund these immediate recovery projects up to the value of \$425,000. These initiatives are outlined in the GORRT submission to the Sub –Committee and have been jointly agreed with both Councils.

Medium term and long term actions are yet to be considered by the Economic Sub- committee. The impacts of the short, medium and long term actions will be assessed and reported on.

### Completed Initiatives

| Completed Initiatives  |                         |          |  |   |   |                              |                           |
|--|-------------------------|----------|--|---|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Project / Initiative   | Delivery Responsibility | Status   | Tourism Marketing / Industry Development | Event encouraging visitation & community well-being | Small infrastructure project enhancing community and visitor experience | Local promotional activities | Other economic activation |
| Relocation of Falls Festival   | RDV                     | Complete |  | x   |   |                              |                           |
| Apollo Bay Seafood Festival  | CoS                     | Complete |  | x   |   |                              |                           |
| Wye Revival  | CoS                     | Complete |  | x   |   |                              |                           |
| The Today Show   | GORRT                   | Complete |  | x   |   | x                            |                           |
| Sunrise  | Tourism Vic             | Complete |  | x   |   | x                            |                           |
| Advertising Space in 4 editions of the Herald Sun in Feb                 | Tourism Vic             | Complete | x  |   |   | x                            |                           |
| Promotion of Pier to Pub   | Tourism Vic             | Complete |  | x   |   | x                            |                           |
| Promotion of Cadel Evans Road Race                                       | Tourism Vic             | Complete |  | x   |   | x                            |                           |
| GOR Region featured in the US as part of the Australian Open             | Tourism Vic             | Complete | x  |   |   | x                            |                           |
| GOR promotion through an intrastate marketing campaign "Wander Victoria" | Tourism Victoria        | Complete | x  |   |   |                              |                           |
| Small Business Bus visited Apollo Bay                                    | SBV                     | Complete |  |   |   |                              | x                         |

The Economic Recovery Sub Committee will assess and recommend future proposals at their regular meetings and ensure all projects are put through a sound process.

There has been no strict timeline on when funding is to be expended. However the Economic Recovery Sub Committee will look to expend funds effectively and efficiently

### 3.8. RECOVERY SURVEY INITIATIVES

The Wye River and Separation Creek Recovery Group (WSRG) was formed in early January 2016 in response to a request from the Emergency Management Commissioner. WSRG was asked to advise on recovery issues in the days and weeks following the Christmas Day fires. WSRG was formed with representation from major services groups, businesses and property owners in the community

The Recovery Survey Report commissioned by EMV on behalf of the WRSC Recovery Group helped identify a range of matters that members of the community considered important.

The survey listed nine potential projects that could be undertaken over the medium term. Many of the identified projects are larger than can be undertaken with donated funds. The preferences and ratings will be helpful in advising agencies on the priorities of the community.

| Project  | Preference Score |
|--|------------------|
| Developing a plan to control the regrowth of weeds on both public and private land                                       | 689              |
| Beautifying Paddy's Path with indigenous plants and sculptures   | 626              |
| Underground power-lines in areas where feasible, such as the town centre   | 614              |
| Organising with local plant nurseries to supply subsidised indigenous plants to all property owners affected by the fire | 609              |
| Improve access and facilities for the beach at Wye River and Separation Creek  | 568              |
| Replanting Harrington Park with indigenous plants  | 558              |
| Access to courses on emergency management for all our volunteers   | 495              |
| Additional walks through the bush marked out and maintained  | 491              |
| New community noticeboards for Wye River and Separation Creek  | 361              |

In addition to gauging responses for the 9 projects the comments section of the survey allowed free text from respondents. Many community members left detailed suggestions for new projects, comments on how the recovery ought to progress and feedback on priorities for the recovery. The Issues identified through comments include:

| Survey Comments                           |   |
|---|---|
| Environment protection:                   | Prevent erosion through replanting; Consider the landscape in the rebuild; Further tree removal to remove future hazards; Educate all about replanting for future fire prevention; Deal with the feral animals  |
| Public amenities:                         | While some thought the suggestions were opportunistic the improvement of public amenities to attract visitors back received a lot of comments; Support for the upgrade of the playground, River Walk, public toilets and beach and a range of specific suggestions. |
| Powerlines:                               | Underground powerlines would make the community safer   |
| Roads and parking:                        | Repairs and maintenance a high priority; Widen roads to make them safer; Signage could be improved; New solutions for parking are needed  |
| Assistance to those who lost their homes: | Clear statements to assist permanent residents; Suggested ideas to assist those who are re-building (including keeping the temporary accommodation at the caravan park  |
| Well being:                               | Support for the well-being of community members is important in the recovery  |
| Walks:                                    | Including Paddy's path  |
| Water quality:                            | Water management should be improved   |
| Fire safety:                              | Projects are needed to improve the community's fire safety  |
| Assistance for businesses:                | It is necessary to support local businesses   |
| Internet and phone reception:             | Both phone reception and internet noted as important  |
| Volunteers:                               | Community volunteers could be better utilised and supported   |
| Memorials:                                | Memorials were suggested to commemorate the tragedy   |

Attachment 1 identifies how the WRSC Resettlement Plan has currently responded to the projects raised in the Recovery Survey. The full report will be on Wye Sep Connect.

The Community Resilience Committee and the broader community with the assistance of Community Connection Lead (Colac Otway Shire) will further develop projects and opportunities.

Ideas and initiatives not directly addressed in the plan to date may be added to the plan as and when they gain support and an agreed method of delivery.

## ATTACHMENT 1: WRSC PLAN RESPONSE TO THE RECOVERY SURVEY

The WRSC Resettlement Plan response to the surveyed Projects is shown in the following table. Where the Plan does not specifically address a community project, the community will need to establish a method to prioritise these and other projects

| Project  | WRSC Plan Status                 | Further Actions  |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Developing a plan to control the regrowth of weeds on both public and private land   | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan |  |
| Beautifying Paddy's Path with indigenous plants and sculptures   | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan |  |
| Underground power-lines in areas where feasible, such as the town centre   | Not currently being considered   | Facilitate discussion with Powercor on future planning and opportunities |
| Organising with local plant nurseries to supply subsidised indigenous plants to all property owners affected by the fire   |                                  | Community to prioritise  |
| Improve access and facilities for the beach at Wye River and Separation Creek  | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan |  |
| Replanting Harrington Park with indigenous plants  | Infrastructure Plan              |  |
| Access to courses on emergency management for all our volunteers   |                                  | Community to prioritise  |
| Additional walks through the bush marked out and maintained  | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan |  |
| New community noticeboards for Wye River and Separation Creek  |                                  | Community to prioritise  |
| <b>Plan response to Survey Comments</b>  |                                  |  |
| Environment protection: Prevent erosion through replanting; Consider the landscape in the rebuild; Further tree removal to remove future hazards; Educate all about replanting for future fire   | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan |  |
| Public amenities: While some thought the suggestions were opportunistic the improvement of public amenities to attract visitors back received a lot of comments; Support for the upgrade of the playground, River Walk, public toilets and beach and a range of specific suggestions | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan | Ensure appropriate elements are referred to the Infrastructure Plan      |
| Powerlines: Underground powerlines would make the community safer  | No currently being consider      |  |
| Roads and parking: Repairs and maintenance a high priority; Widen roads to make them safer; Signage could be improved; New solutions for parking are needed  | Infrastructure Plan              |  |
| Assistance to those who lost their homes: Clear statements to assist permanent residents; Suggested ideas  | Wellbeing Plan                   |  |

|   |                                  |                            |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| to assist those who are re-building (including keeping the temporary accommodation at the caravan park) |                                  |                            |
| Well being: Support for the well-being of community members is important in the recovery                | Wellbeing Plan                   |                            |
| Walks: Including Paddy's path   | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan |                            |
| Water quality: Water management should be improved  | Fauna, Flora and Beachscape Plan |                            |
| Fire safety: Projects are needed to improve the community's fire safety                                 |                                  | Community to prioritise    |
| Assistance for businesses: It is necessary to support local businesses                                  | Business & Tourism Plan          |                            |
| Internet and phone reception: Both phone reception and internet noted as important                      |                                  | To be pursued with Telstra |
| Volunteers: Community volunteers could be better utilised and supported                                 | Wellbeing                        |                            |
| Memorials: Memorials were suggested to commemorate the tragedy  |                                  | Community to prioritise    |

## Version control

| Version | Date      | Description   | Author          |
|---------|-----------|---|-----------------|
| 0.1     | 7.04.2016 | Wye River Separation Creek Resettlement Plan<br>4 Feb V0.1 (PUBLIC) | P. VAN LAMBAART |

## Document approval

WRSC Resettlement Leadership Group

| Name | Title | Organisation |
|------|-------|--------------|
|      |       |              |
|      |       |              |
|      |       |              |