

Towong Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee



Meeting details			
Date and time	Thursday March 5 2026 10:00am		Meeting #1
Location	Tallangatta Council Chambers 32 Towong St and some on MS Teams		
Chair (Delegate)	Mark Florence	Secretariat	Sven Erikson

Members (voting members)	
Agriculture Victoria	Rosa Cleave
Ambulance Victoria	Matt Metcaf
Australian Red Cross	Lynne Jones
Emergency Recovery Victoria	Eilidh Grigg
Country Fire Authority	Claire Healy
Community Rep	Sean Farrar
Community Rep	Sharyn Nankervis
Community Rep	Diana Hobbs
Community Rep	
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Sharyn Eldridge
Department of Health	Christy Jackson/Garry Simpson
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	Dave Jenson
Towong Shire Council	Sven Erikson
Victoria State Emergency Services (SES)	Glenn Mercer
Victoria Police	
	Warren Lukins
Apologies	
Guests	Orrin Pritchard – North East Water

Towong Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee

Item	Time	Subject	Speaker	Supporting documents																																																							
1	10.00	Welcome - Acknowledgement of country - Chair's introduction - Apologies - Warren Lukins - Member Intros due to having a lot of proxy's	Mark Florence																																																								
2	10.05	Minutes of Previous Meeting - Minutes were circulated prior to the meeting and a few weeks after the December meeting - Sean Farrar moved to accept the minutes, Diana Hobbs seconded.	Mark Florence	Towong MEMPC Minutes 04-12-25.docx																																																							
3	10.10	Review of action items <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Action Number</th><th>Action Description</th><th>Action Required</th><th>Member Responsible</th><th>Action Status</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>152</td><td>Correspondance</td><td>Eilidh Grigg to Follow up with Svebn Erikson Regarding new EM Impact sytem rollout for Collating Impact asesment data</td><td>Eilidh Griff - ERV</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>153</td><td>CERA</td><td>Daniel Flack (Telstra) to Circulate slides from Presentation</td><td>Sven Erikson-Secretariat</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>154</td><td>CERA</td><td>Daniel Flack to follow up on telstrat infrastructuire impact zone data to pass on to DEECA</td><td>Daniel Flack</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>155</td><td>CERA</td><td>Continue to seek Ausnets Attendance to furtue MEMPC</td><td>Sven Erikson-Secretariat</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>156</td><td>CERA</td><td>Sven Erikson to follow up on Council current Telecommunication advocacy with the state minister</td><td>Sven Erikson-Secretariat</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>157</td><td>Ag Vic</td><td>Bird Flu slides to be circulated by Rosa</td><td>Jeff Cave - Ag Vic</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>158</td><td>Municipal Fire Planning Committee</td><td>Dave Jenson Jenson and Claire Healy to follow up the next governance cycle for and Chair position for the sub Committee</td><td>Dave Jenson-DEECA</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>159</td><td>General Business</td><td>Council to update MEMPC on 2019/2020 fire and 2022 Flood Recovery</td><td>Sven Erikson-Secretariat</td><td>In Progress</td></tr> <tr> <td>160</td><td>General Business</td><td>Christy Jackson to circulate Extreme Heat Tool kit</td><td>Christy Jackson - DoH</td><td>Completed</td></tr> <tr> <td>161</td><td>North East Water</td><td>Consider North East Water as a member of the MEMPC, circulate an email for discussion out of session</td><td>Sven Erikson-Secretariat</td><td>In Progress</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Action Number	Action Description	Action Required	Member Responsible	Action Status	152	Correspondance	Eilidh Grigg to Follow up with Svebn Erikson Regarding new EM Impact sytem rollout for Collating Impact asesment data	Eilidh Griff - ERV	Completed	153	CERA	Daniel Flack (Telstra) to Circulate slides from Presentation	Sven Erikson-Secretariat	Completed	154	CERA	Daniel Flack to follow up on telstrat infrastructuire impact zone data to pass on to DEECA	Daniel Flack	Completed	155	CERA	Continue to seek Ausnets Attendance to furtue MEMPC	Sven Erikson-Secretariat	Completed	156	CERA	Sven Erikson to follow up on Council current Telecommunication advocacy with the state minister	Sven Erikson-Secretariat	Completed	157	Ag Vic	Bird Flu slides to be circulated by Rosa	Jeff Cave - Ag Vic	Completed	158	Municipal Fire Planning Committee	Dave Jenson Jenson and Claire Healy to follow up the next governance cycle for and Chair position for the sub Committee	Dave Jenson-DEECA	Completed	159	General Business	Council to update MEMPC on 2019/2020 fire and 2022 Flood Recovery	Sven Erikson-Secretariat	In Progress	160	General Business	Christy Jackson to circulate Extreme Heat Tool kit	Christy Jackson - DoH	Completed	161	North East Water	Consider North East Water as a member of the MEMPC, circulate an email for discussion out of session	Sven Erikson-Secretariat	In Progress	Sven Erikson	MEMPC - Towong - Action Register 2026.XLSX
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4	10.15	Correspondence - Agency Report – DFFH - Agency Report – DoH Christy (DFFH) reported that Sven requested data for heatwave warnings, which is included in their agency report, Internal debrief on heat season is pending. Regular conversations continue with the BOM, there are challenges with heat messaging and clarity on Vic Emergency during emergencies. - Agency Report – SES Big thanks to local Tallangatta, Corryong and Mitta units for the support of fire operations - Agency Report – ARC – Dec 25 and March 26 - Agency Report - CFA Claire reported that conversations regarding the resumption of permit burning will begin, but nothing is currently in place.	Sven Erikson	DFFH Southeast Unit Agency Report January 2026 .pdf Q1 2026 DH EM Agency Report-Towong- March 2026.pdf SES Hume Region Agency MEMPC Report October 2025 - January 2026.pdf Red Cross MEMPC Report - Dec 2025.docx Red Cross MEMPC Report - March 2026.docx

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				CFA Report to Towong MEMPC 05 March 2026.docx
5	10.20	Response - Walwa River Road Fire - Overview • Shout out and thanks to all agencies involved in the response to the Wawa fire. • Massive effort over a month until contained status. • Incident control team in tallangatta ICC were exceptional. • Common goal, cooperation, and good results - Fire Summary • 16th fire of the season: Waller River Road fire. • 121,000 hectares, started January 5th by lightning. • Original thoughts: unattended fire from private property. • Bushfire investigators confident it started just inside Crownland estate by lightning not recorded on tracker. • Contained around February 2nd, under control 1 on February 13th. • Total fire perimeter around 350 hectares. • Constructed 400 km of containment lines, including private property. • Peak resourcing: 550 personnel operating 24 hours a day. • 450 firefighters (firefighters, contractors, agency support). • 100 in the IMT. • 75 firefighting appliances. • 35 pieces of heavy plant (mostly contracted). • 9 aircraft on blow-up days - Timeline and Management • Fire started in steep, inaccessible area, grew to 300 hectares on the first afternoon. • First containment strategy: old burn boundary along ridge line. • Opened it up and started back burning on Tuesday night. • Fallback strategy: second containment line. • First parcel: 2,000 hectares.	Dave Jenson	WALWA - River Road.pptx

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		• Other two parcels: 8,000 hectares. • Breached on Wednesday afternoon, fell back to other containment lines, put in 20km of back burn. • Preparing next fallback strategy, brushing up tracks. • Had they needed to fall back to that, it would have taken it to around 16,000 hectares. • "It's one of those instances where we had to fight fire with fire." • Breached on Thursday, main blow-up day, ran south. • Containment strategy: squeeze it in, contain it to Tallangatta Valley in the west and down through Burrowye into Cudgewa Valley on the east and northeast. • Preparing burn boundary to the south around the Wabba Wilderness. • Gibb Range Road is a strategic fuel break. • Cleared vegetation and hazardous trees up to 40-50 meters. • Impacted Murray Valley highway on Friday, burnt out over the next couple of weeks. • Brushing up all those red lines as well and preparing them for back burning operations if we needed to. • Always looking 3-7 days ahead in fallback strategies. • First three days: only fire in the state, got everything asked for. • Things got tight as other fires started - Losses • 17 houses lost, number of outbuildings. • Lost Mount Lawson communications infrastructure (radio network, mobile network). • Intensity melted solar panel (backup power supply). • 10,000 hectares of plantation lost (out of 14,000). • Relatively low livestock loss for the fire size. • Severe impacts to wildlife, cultural and European heritage sites. - Current Status and Recovery • Still running as an incident, under control 1. • No concerns about fire growing. • Allows continuation of recovery works funded by the incident. • Allows other agencies (e.g., Parks Victoria) to do works. • Target to go to under control 2 by April 30th, reverts back to agency business. • Incident management team of 12 in place until April 30th.		

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		• Stabilization of control lines on private property almost complete. • Opening of road network and forest road network is complete. • Looking at public-private interface boundary fencing, government support to repair on a cost basis - Extra Firefighting Support • Agencies with frontline firefighters called through National Resource Sharing Centre. • Support from all states, British Columbia Wildfire Service (INT team and field crew), New Zealand, and Alberta Wildfire Service. • Universal approaches to incident management across countries. • Principles are the same, some minor differences. • In Victoria, incident due to warnings and advice to community. • In British Columbia, managed by the local municipality. • Environment is different (e.g., dollar value on trees in Canada). - Community Responsiveness • Community responsiveness is attributed to experience from previous fires and improved messaging. • Messaging was direct and realistic about potential containment breaches and emphasized individual responsibility for safety. • The chief has been pushing the message that "we can only do so much" and firefighter safety is the first priority. • There is sensitivity in the community, with feedback regarding evacuations and relief centre management - Cross Border Arrangements • Issues arose with cross-border arrangements when evacuees went north into NSW and an unofficial relief centre was set up by community. • There is a need for greater connection with Snowy Council or Snowy Hydra or Cancer to coordinate relief efforts. • Formalising arrangements with the relevant agency and a registration process at NSW relief centres could be beneficial. • There have been suggestions that more people would have went to Tumbarumba rather than Wodonga		

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		ACTION: MEMPC to explore NSW ERC site options and the cross border arrangements to put it in place		
6	10.45	Recovery – Walwa River Road Fire - Recovery Phase Introduction • A dedicated recovery team and unit have been established, managed by Craig Heiner (Former Executive staff member of North East Water). • The unit is coordinating secondary impact assessments and working with communities to identify needs. • Funding is expected to support recovery activities through June 2028. - Operational Structure for Recovery • Two recovery hubs are in operation: one in Tallangatta and one in Corryong. • An outreach model is in place with Recovery Officers Kay Nankervis and Tony Irwin supporting the community, especially the farming community. • Secondary impact assessments are underway, progressing from primary residences to other structures and properties within the fire polygon footprint. - Focus on Community Support • Recovery efforts focus on recording losses and advocating for community members, particularly regarding ERV's cleanup program. • Referral processes are emphasized to connect individuals with case support and mental health services through Gateway Health. • Challenges exist with the 1-800-number-only self-referral system for mental health support, prompting efforts to find a "no wrong door" approach. - Financial Support and Relief Payments • Initial financial support was provided as financial relief payments to evacuated people in the Towong Shire. relief payments were provided across the state, totalling over \$12 million. 1,180 payments were for Towong Shire residents. Relief payments closed last Friday and were designed to support immediate relief needs.	Sven Erikson /Mark Florence	

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		• Re-establishment payments are now open, with 20 applications from Towong Shire currently under assessment. Criteria: Must be the principal place of residence, without insurance (content, building, or both), and means-tested. One payment has already been made to a Towong resident. • Temporary Accommodation Support Program is open. • Requires a case manager through the Emergency Recovery Support Program (funded through DFFH). • Can provide a free caravan for 12 months and support essential service connections, especially for uninsured farmers who want to stay on their farms. • Rental relief program: Provides up to \$3,600 for rental relief. - Emergency Recovery Support Program • Delivered by Gateway Health for Towong Shire. • Offers a sliding scale of support, from light assistance to intensive case management. • Available to everyone impacted, including businesses and homeowners, regardless of insurance status. • A Hume Region Social Recovery Working Group has been established, Convened and coordinated weekly by Linda Shields and Shauna Walter. Provides a forum for agencies to share issues, opportunities, and manage risks related to social recovery - Coordination and Community-Led Recovery • Local coordination with agencies is a priority, led by Craig Heiner. • Focuses on coordinating engagement and services. • Supporting community-led recovery: ERV supports community-led events in practical ways. • Providing resources like barbecues, catering, or agency representatives if desired. • Respecting community preferences for private gatherings without agency involvement		
7	11.00	Update: from sub-committees		
		Fire Management Sub-Committee	Dave Jensen/ Claire Healy	
		- Committee Update • The Fire Subcommittee's governance arrangements have reverted to Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) for the next two years.		

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		- The committee was scheduled to meet in mid-January to plan the year's agenda but was postponed due to the fires. - The committee will reschedule the meeting before the next MIPC meeting		
8	11.15	MEMP, Sub Plan and Complementary plans – Review and Development - MEMP 2027 - Working group update – Sven Erikson - MEMP is due for assurance this year, and a working group has been established. - Considering a change in timeline for assurance due to agency priorities. - The committee is considering whether to tidy up the current plan or conduct a more critical review. - The MEMP is a living document that is updated and changed regularly. ACTION: MEMPC to seek new timeline for MEMP assurance due to impact of the Walwa River Road Fire - Flood and Storm Plan – Update – SES - The flood and storm plan is being updated with a new template. - Progress has been delayed due to calls and support efforts. - The update will be pushed out to the next meeting ACTION: Flood and Storm Sub Plan update to happen at the June Meeting		
9	11.30	CERA - A rolling agenda is in place to work through a risk per meeting. - SES is the driver of the CERA system. - The next risk will be scheduled for the June meeting.	SES	
10	11.40	Confirm any new action items ACTION: MEMPC to explore NSW ERC site options and the cross border arrangements to put it in place ACTION: MEMPC to seek new timeline for MEMP assurance due to impact of the Walwa River Road Fire ACTION: Flood and Storm Sub Plan update to happen at the June Meeting	All	MEMPC - Towong - Action Register 2026.XLSX

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		ACTION: Extend invitation to Corryong Health, Tallangatta Health and Walwa Bush Nursing Centre f a future meeting to discuss response mechanisms		
11	11.45	General Business - Health Service involvement - Matt AV ACTION: Extend invitation to Corryong Health, Tallangatta Health and Walwa Bush Nursing Centre f a future meeting to discuss response mechanisms Meeting closed at X:X AEST Next meeting confirmed for 10am, June 4 2026 – MS Teams	Chair	