Victorian response plan for wildlife impacted by fire

VICTORIA State Government | Environment, Land, Water and Planning

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Traditional owner acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.

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Acronyms

AAR	After Action Review
AIIMS	Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System
AVA	Australian Veterinary Association
CFA	Country Fire Authority
DELWP	Department of Environment Land Water and Planning
DJPR	Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions
EM Act	Victorian Emergency Management Act 2013
EMC	Emergency Management Commissioner
FFMVic	Forest Fire Management Victoria
Firearms Act	Firearms Act 1996
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria
IAP	Incident Action Plan
IC	Incident Controller
IMT	Incident Management Team
ISP	Incident Shift Plan
OHS Act	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
PIO	Public Information Officer
POCTA	Prevention of cruelty to animals
PPE	personal protective equipment
PV	Parks Victoria
RAC	Regional Agency Commander
RCC	Regional Control Centres
S8	Schedule 8 medicines
SAC	State Agency Commander
SCC	State Control Centre
SCOT	State Coordination Team
SCT	State Control Team
SEMP	State Emergency Management Plan
SOI	Safe Operating Instructions
SRRS	State Resource Request System
SWMS	Safe Work Management Statements
SWP	Safe Work Procedures
VICSES	Victoria State Emergency Services
VIMA	Victorian Managed Insurance Agency
WESN	Wildlife Emergency Support Network
WV	Wildlife Victoria
ZV	Zoos Victoria

1. Introduction

Fire is a recurring part of the Victorian landscape with the fire season now extending either side of the summer months, impacting on communities and the environment. Wildlife face unique challenges during fire events through displacement, by injuries and burns sustained trying to escape from the fire and the loss of habitat including food and water sources.

Under the *Victorian Emergency Management Act 2013* (EM Act) and the *State Emergency Management Plan* (SEMP), **wildlife welfare arising from declared emergencies** is defined as an emergency event. This plan is focused on the arrangements for responding to wildlife welfare issues arising from fire.

The SEMP defines the Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (DELWP) as the lead control agency for this type of event. DELWP delivers this through Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic).

DELWP's approach to managing injured wildlife is to minimise harm and suffering and ensure that animals are treated humanely. Critical to the successful implementation of the response arrangements are partnerships across agencies and with non-government organisations. These partnership arrangements include training and coordination of personnel from across the veterinary and wildlife care sectors and provision of advice to the broader community before, during and after an emergency event.

Wildlife recovery and rehabilitation activities post fire will vary depending on the scale, severity and location of the fire and impacts on wildlife, communities and the environment. These arrangements are not included in this Plan.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the *Victorian Response Plan for Wildlife Impacted by Fire* (the Plan) is to define how DELWP, its partner agencies, contractors and volunteers will respond to wildlife welfare arising from a declared emergency (fire). Setting out the standards, policies and processes, this plan ensures that:

- health and safety risks to employees, contractors and volunteers are minimised
- wildlife welfare is managed in an effective and humane manner aligned with the state emergency management priorities
- each animal is assessed and managed humanely with decisions made to achieve the best welfare outcome given the circumstances
- the wildlife welfare response is proportionate across various scales of fire risk and severity
- a process to enable the safe involvement of trained and accredited staff, contractors and volunteers is established and regularly reviewed
- a clear end-to-end process is established for wildlife impacted by fire from field assessment to capture and treatment or euthanasia
- evidence-based 'best practice' standard operating procedures and protocols for responding to wildlife impacted by fire in Victoria are applied.

2.1 Scope

The Plan defines the following arrangements for wildlife response activities under Victoria's emergency management arrangements including:

- field assessment of wildlife impacted by fire
- veterinary assessment of wildlife at triage units
- safety on fire grounds
- composition of wildlife response teams
- training, accreditation and medical requirements for wildlife responders
- accreditation, coordination and deployment of FFMVic, contract and volunteer resources
- welfare assessment protocols for wildlife impacted by fire
- supplementary feeding guidance
- advice on donations and assistance from community members.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Legal authority

The EM Act defines emergencies into two different categories – Class 1 and Class 2. These are defined in Table 1. **Wildlife welfare arising from an emergency event** is considered as a Class 2 type emergency.

As defined in the SEMP that sits under the EM Act, DELWP is the lead control agency for responding to wildlife welfare arising from an emergency event, including fire.

A fire event is considered separately as a Class 1 emergency and may be managed by either DELWP, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) or Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV). Regardless of the lead fire agency, DELWP retains responsibility for managing wildlife welfare issues arising from the fire.

Incidents of wildlife welfare arising from an emergency event are then categorised into three levels. Each level is determined by the scale and impact of the incident (refer Section 3.8; Table 3).

3.2 Emergency Management Arrangements

Victoria bases its emergency management arrangements on the adherence to several management functions including:

- **Control:** The overall direction of response activities in an emergency, operating horizontally across agencies.
- **Command:** The internal direction of personnel and resources of an agency, operating vertically within the agency.
- **Coordination:** The bringing together of agencies and resources to ensure effective preparation for, response to and recovery from emergencies.
- **Consequence:** The management of the effect of emergencies on individuals, the community, infrastructure and the environment.
- **Communication:** The engagement and provision of information across agencies and proactively with the community to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.
- **Community connection:** The understanding and connecting with trusted networks, trusted leaders and all communities to support resilience and decision-making.

3.3 State Emergency Management Priorities

The State Emergency Management Priorities underpin and guide all decisions during a response to any emergency. The priorities are:

- Protection and preservation of life and relief of suffering is paramount. This includes:
  - safety of emergency response personnel
  - safety of community members including vulnerable community members and visitors/tourists.
- Issuing of community information and community warnings detailing incident information that is timely, relevant and tailored to assist community members make informed decisions about their safety
- Protection of critical infrastructure and community assets that support community resilience
- Protection of residential property as a place of primary residence
- Protection of assets supporting individual livelihoods and economic production that supports individual and community financial sustainability
- Protection of environmental and conservation assets that considers the cultural, biodiversity, and social values of the environment.

Table 1: Emergency class definitions within Victoria

Emergency Class	Definition
1	A major fire or any other major emergency for which the control agency is the Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV), Country Fire Authority (CFA) or Victoria State Emergency Services (VICSES).
2	A major emergency that is not: • a Class 1 emergency or • a warlike act or act of terrorism, whether directed at Victoria or at any other state or territory of the Commonwealth. Class 2 emergencies include: • Cetacean entanglement stranding and vessel strike • Wildlife affected by marine pollution • Wildlife welfare arising from a declared emergency (including fire).

3.4 The Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS)

In line with Victorian emergency response arrangements, wildlife emergency response adopts a standardised approach to incident management known as the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS). AIIMS is founded on five fundamental principles:

Flexibility	AIIMS is adaptable to an all hazards-all agency environment. It needs to be able to respond to changes that occur with the evolution of an incident, both during escalation and resolution, and from a focus on response to a focus on community and agency recovery.
Management by objectives	A process of management where the Incident Controller, consulting as appropriate with the Incident Management Team and supporting agencies, determines the desired outcomes for the incident.
Functional management	The process of structuring an organisation into sections or units based on the type of work to be performed. AIIMS identifies a number of critical functions that are required to be undertaken to manage an emergency incident effectively.
Span of control	A principle that needs to be applied in both the structuring and staffing of an Incident Management Team. The concept relates to the number of groups or individuals that can successfully be supervised by one person. No more than five reporting groups or individuals is considered desirable.
Unity of command	There is one set of common objectives for all those involved in the response to an incident, leading to one consolidated plan for all responders. Each subordinate should report to only one supervisor.

3.5 Command and Control definitions

The concepts of Command and Control are key management functions that define the utilisation of resources within and across agencies during emergency response. Appendix 1 outlines the Command and Control arrangements as they relate to wildlife welfare response arising from fire.

3.5.1 Control arrangements

Control of an emergency event is the line of management or responsibility of an incident, which operates across organisations. This allows an Incident Controller to directly manage and task all agencies deployed to respond to that incident.

3.5.2 Command arrangements

While responding to an emergency incident, an agency maintains the internal direction of its personnel and resources. In this way, they can assess requests for resources, and determine if they can be released to the incident. Once this occurs, those resources are incorporated under the control arrangements.

3.6 State response arrangements

3.6.1 Response tiers

Emergency management response in Victoria operates at three tiers: incident, region and state. The regional and state tiers are activated when there is a significant event anticipated, underway or when an incident may last for an extended period. The region and state tiers support the Incident Management Team through coordination of resources at each level.

3.6.1.1 Incident level arrangements

To lead and ensure coordination of response activities mitigating an emergency event, an Incident Management Team (IMT), led by an Incident Controller (IC) are appointed. This team will consist of sufficient people to perform all the functions required to address the emergency. The Incident Controller will assume overall command of the situation and will report to the Regional Agency Commander (RAC) during initial response.

3.6.1.2 Regional level arrangements

DELWP delivers its services and programs throughout Victoria via six regions. Each of these regions have in place emergency response arrangements led by a Regional Agency Commander. It is the responsibility of the DELWP Regional Agency Commander to ensure that an adequate Incident Management Team structure is in place during the peak response period for all emergencies where DELWP is the "Control Agency" and to make appropriate decisions relating to escalation and de-escalation of resources.

3.6.1.3 State level arrangements

The State Agency Commander (SAC) is the role that (acting on behalf of the DELWP Chief Fire Officer) is responsible for the overall coordination of DELWP's response to fire and other emergencies. This role is based in the State Control Centre. The six RACs report to the DELWP State Agency Commander.

3.6.2 State Control Centre (SCC)

The SCC is the state's primary control centre for management of Class 1 and some Class 2 emergencies; it is the hub of a network of Regional Control Centres (RCC), which support the Incident Management Teams.

In some cases, Class 2 emergencies may be managed from another location depending on the size, type and nature of the incident.

The SCC is led by the State Response Controller. This position is in place at all times and leads and manages the operational response to a Class 1 emergency.

3.6.3 State Controller (Wildlife)

As a Class 2 type emergency, a State Controller (Wildlife) can be appointed when the wildlife emergency escalates to a Level 3 incident. The DELWP Secretary is responsible for considering the need for this appointment. In doing so, they will consult with the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC) and others as appropriate.

Typically, a Class 2 State Controller will only be required for a Level 3 incident but may also be required where a Level 2 incident is likely to escalate to a Level 3 event. The State Controller (Wildlife) is based at the SCC.

The role statement for a Class 2 State Controller can be found in Appendix 2.

3.6.4 State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies

The State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies is a DELWP-led role that is responsible for the provision of wildlife specific technical information to the State Response Controller or Class 2 State Controller (where appointed), Regional Agency Commanders and Incident Controllers. This will include advice on appropriate protocols, staffing and response options as outlined in this plan. The role will be the key technical point of contact for the response. This role is rostered and is in place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

3.6.5 Wildlife Welfare Sector Liaison

The Wildlife Welfare Sector Liaison is a representative of the wildlife welfare sector within Victoria appointed by the Secretary of DELWP.

The role will be engaged during Level 3 wildlife welfare incidents arising from fire. The role may also be deployed for Level 2 incidents on a case-by-case basis where there is the potential for it to expand to a Level 3 incident.

The role, which will engage with the State Controller (Wildlife), does not however have a formal position within the emergency management structure and may be based remotely or at DELWP head office from time to time.

3.6.6 Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic)

DELWP delivers its emergency response activities through Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic). FFMVic consists of specialist staff drawn from DELWP, Parks Victoria (PV), Melbourne Water and VicForests. FFMVic personnel will lead wildlife response activities and work in partnership with the Wildlife Emergency Support Network.

3.6.7 Government agency and non-government organisations roles

Table 2 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various government agencies, organisations and groups that may be involved in wildlife response activities during fire events. Within this document, agency staff refers to employees of DELWP and PV who are deployed during emergency incidents under the banner of FFMVic.

Table 2: Organisation activities during preparedness and response

Organisation	Role
DELWP (Lead agency)	• Develop response plans and standards • Develop and deliver training and accreditation • Instigate and lead response activities • Develop and communicate approved incident and response messages to stakeholders • Activate the WESN via deployment requests through the State Control Centre.
Parks Victoria (Support agency)	• Participate in response activities • Contribute to and communicate approved incident and response messages to stakeholders • Contribute to development of response plans.
Wildlife Emergency Support Network	• Provides trained and accredited individuals for deployment into defined wildlife emergency roles including: – triage veterinarians – triage veterinary nurses – triage unit assistants (keepers) – field assessment team veterinarians – field assessment team volunteers drawn from wildlife rescuers and authorised wildlife shelters and foster carers • Maintains records of appropriately trained and accredited individuals for these roles • Responds to deployment requests from DELWP for defined wildlife roles • WESN Coordinator receives and responds to deployment requests from DELWP for defined wildlife roles • WESN Coordinator: – works with DELWP in the training and accreditation of individuals – collates expertise from the network to facilitate continuous improvement in training content.
Australian Veterinary Association	• Support the WESN in identifying veterinarians for field-based assessment teams and triage units for training, accreditation and deployment • Support the development and communication of approved incident and response messages to stakeholders • Receive reports of injured wildlife during emergency events and communicate to DELWP • Participate in the continuous improvement process as appropriate.
RSPCA	• Provide veterinarians and veterinary nurses for training and accreditation through the WESN • Participate in the continuous improvement process as appropriate • Support the development and communication of approved incident and response messages to stakeholders.
Wildlife Victoria	• Identify potential rescuers and authorised wildlife shelters and foster carers to undertake training, accreditation and deployment through the WESN • Support the development and communication of approved incident and response messages to stakeholders • Receive reports of injured wildlife during emergency events and communicate to DELWP • Participate in the continuous improvement process as appropriate.
Zoos Victoria	• Manage triage unit equipment and drug supplies • Provide specialised veterinary care for wildlife impacted by fire • Develop and deliver veterinary and triage training in conjunction with DELWP • Identify veterinarians, veterinary nurses and keepers to undertake training, accreditation and deployment in field-based assessment and triage teams • Identify rescuers and authorised wildlife shelters and foster carers to undertake training, accreditation and deployment in field-based assessment teams • Support the development and communication of approved incident and response messages to stakeholders • Receive reports of injured wildlife during emergency events and communicate to DELWP • Participate in the continuous improvement process as appropriate.
Other wildlife welfare organisations	• Undertake training and accreditation through DELWP and ZV to volunteer in field-based assessment teams • Support the development and communication of approved incident and response messages to stakeholders • Participate in the continuous improvement process as appropriate.

Group	Role
Wildlife rescuers	• Undertake training and accreditation through the WESN to volunteer in field-based assessment teams.
Authorised wildlife shelters and foster carers (rehabilitators)*	• Undertake training and accreditation through the WESN to volunteer in field-based assessment teams • Undertake rehabilitation of injured wildlife following veterinary assessment.

* Throughout this document, authorised wildlife shelters and foster carers are referred to as rehabilitators.

3.7 Incident management

When an emergency occurs, the designated Control Agency will nominate an Incident Controller (IC) to lead the response to the incident. The IC then establishes an Incident Management Team (IMT) to undertake the functions of control, planning, intelligence, public information, operations, investigation, logistics and finance. These roles may be undertaken by appropriately trained and accredited individuals from across the emergency management sector. Where wildlife welfare activities are required to be undertaken, defined wildlife roles will be deployed within the planning and operations functions.

The IMT develops an Incident Action Plan (IAP) which is used to describe the incident objectives, strategies, structures, resources and other information relevant to the control of the incident. It also contains the Incident Shift Plan (ISP) that outlines the essential elements of field operations for the incident, and how human resources will be managed across the incident.

3.8 Wildlife welfare incident levels

In accordance with the principles of AIIMS, incident levels are a function of the scale or significance of the incident and the management structure required to deal with it. As an incident grows in size, duration, complexity or risk, there will be a corresponding need for the incident management structure and response activities to expand.

As per fire events, wildlife welfare incidents are classed in scale from Level 1 (smaller) to Level 3 (larger). There are several indicators that determine the particular level for an incident. These include wildlife welfare impacts, as well as other factors such as the scale and complexity of the required response.

The IMT will determine the required scale of the wildlife response and what roles should be deployed. This occurs following an assessment of the fire and fireground as well as predictions of future fire activity. This will be collated with known biodiversity information on wildlife populations and densities to assess the potential wildlife impact due to the fire. Indicators to guide IMT decision making on incident levels are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Indicators to determine wildlife welfare incident levels

Incident Level	Indicators
Level 1	• 1–10 animals that require assessment • The response is day-to-day business and the incident is managed by a control agency's IMT • The response duration is less than or a single shift • There is little to no potential for escalation • There is a single or limited multi-agency response
Level 2	• Between 10 and 40 animals that require assessment • Impacted area is known to contain a high density or species of wildlife vulnerable to impact • The response duration is multiple shifts • There are one or two incident areas • The incident involves multiple hazards
Level 3	• More than 40 animals that require assessment • Impacted area is known to contain a high density or species of wildlife vulnerable to impact • The incident is of high complexity • The response duration is protracted • There are multiple incident areas

The incident level of a fire is not a guide on the potential impact on wildlife. This is determined by a range of factors including the:

- speed and intensity of the fire
- weather conditions surrounding the incident
- location of the fire
- type and population size of species within the footprint of the fire
- duration of the event.

For example, a small fast moving fire that is considered a Level 1 incident, but is located where it impacts a high number of koalas may require a significant wildlife response team to be established.

Wildlife response activities are focused on the principle of addressing the immediate welfare of wildlife impacted by the fire. The initial response will begin by gathering information from fire crews or initial Wildlife Field Assessment Teams where safe to do so. This information will be used to guide the scale of the response required.

3.9 Wildlife welfare response structure and composition

Table 4 outlines the appropriate and proportionate response activities to different scales of wildlife impacts, including the number of Wildlife Field Assessment Teams and their composition and if a triage unit is required. The IMT is guided by this table in its wildlife response planning.

In the initial phase of a fire, or during or after a small localised fire event, the IMT may utilise locally available resources with the appropriate training and accreditation. This team will address immediate wildlife welfare concerns and provide information back to the IMT on the appropriate level of response that is required.

The wildlife response may be escalated or scaled down over the course of the event, depending on changes to the fire and operating environment including safety and access and the number of impacted wildlife that are being observed and reported. This will be reviewed regularly by the IMT.

While fire impacted wildlife, requiring intervention, are being encountered in the field, the triage unit and IMT will remain in place. This may be a reduced IMT once the on-ground fire activities have concluded. This is essential to allow DELWP to fulfil its responsibilities towards wildlife welfare, as well as providing a mechanism for the safe and effective deployment and management of FFMVic personnel, contractors and volunteers, including deactivation.

The structure of the response based on observations of the fire ground will be scaled up or down according to need as outlined in Table 4. Elements outlined in this Table are detailed in upcoming sections.

Table 4: Initial activation triggers to guide scale of wildlife response

Incident Level	Indicators	Response activities	Team composition
1	• 1–10 animals that require assessment • The response is day-to-day business and the incident is managed by a control agency's IMT • The response duration is less than or a single shift • There is little to no potential for escalation • There is a single or limited multi-agency response.	• Wildlife Field Assessment Team to monitor and assess wildlife impacts and as appropriate monitor, humanely euthanise or capture and transfer to local veterinarian for assessment and then to rehabilitation or release.	**Operations** • Initial team may consist of Wildlife Field Assessment Team of two FFMVic staff (one with firearms accreditation), and then supplemented by an accredited volunteer • Utilisation of local veterinarian in clinic who can access ZV veterinarian for prognostic and treatment support and guidance. *Refer to Figure 1*
2	• Between 10 and 40 animals that require assessment • Impacted area is known to contain a high density or species of wildlife vulnerable to impact • The response duration is multiple shifts • There are one or two incident areas • The incident involves multiple hazards.	• Wildlife Response Plan for incident developed • Wildlife Field Assessment Team to assess and monitor wildlife impacts and as appropriate monitor, humanely euthanise or capture and transfer to local veterinarian or triage unit if established • Consider the establishment of a triage unit depending on fire intensity, location and species present • Transfer of wildlife to release sites or rehabilitation • Consider of appointment of a State Controller (wildlife) and Wildlife Welfare Sector Liasion role.	**Planning** • Wildlife Coordinator in Planning Unit **Operations** • Wildlife Response Officer (if required) • Two or more Wildlife Field Assessment Team. Each crew will consist of an FFMVic team leader, a FFMVic staff member with firearms accreditation, a field veterinarian and an accredited volunteer. • Triage unit established if required including triage team leader, veterinarian and veterinary nurse • Transfer of recovered wildlife to release sites, and/or hospitalisation at ZV and/or transfer of wildlife to registered wildlife rehabilitator. *Refer to Figure 2*
3	• More than 40 animals that require assessment • Impacted area is known to contain a high density or species of wildlife vulnerable to impact • The incident is of high complexity • The response duration is protracted • There are multiple incident areas.	• Wildlife Response Plan for incident developed • Wildlife Field Assessment Team to monitor and assess wildlife impacts and as appropriate monitor, humanely euthanise or capture and transfer to triage unit • Consider the establishment of a triage unit depending on fire intensity, location and species present • Transfer of wildlife to release sites or rehabilitation • Consider of appointment of a State Controller (wildlife) and Wildlife Welfare Sector Liasion role.	**Planning** • Wildlife Coordinator in Planning Unit **Operations** • Wildlife Response Officer deployed • Two or more Wildlife Field Assessment Team. Each crew will consist of an FFMVic team leader, FFMVic staff member with firearms accreditation, a field veterinarian and an accredited volunteer • Wildlife Triage unit established with including triage team leader, veterinarian and veterinary nurse and keeper/assistant as required • Transfer of recovered wildlife to release sites, and/or hospitalisation at ZV and/or transfer of wildlife to registered wildlife rehabilitator. *Refer to Figure 3*

Figure 1 details the IMT structure for a Level 1 response with Wildlife Field Assessment Team deployed reporting to the Operations Officer. This team will generally consist of two accredited FFMVic staff members (one with firearms accreditation) and a volunteer. If an immediate response is required to address known animal welfare concerns, the team may be deployed with just FFMVic staff while the volunteer is in transit.

Figure 2 demonstrates the IMT structure for a Level 2 response. This includes the appointment of a Wildlife Coordinator to the Planning Unit and Wildlife Response Officer to the Operations Unit. The Wildlife Response Officer role should be established where two or more Wildlife Field Assessment Teams are deployed, or if it is not practical for them to be supervised by fire response team leaders.

Each Wildlife Field Assessment Team will consist of an FFMVic team leader, supported by an FFMVic crew member with firearms accreditation, a field veterinarian (darter) and a volunteer.

A Triage Unit may be established if required. This team will consist of a triage team leader, veterinarian and veterinary nurse. In smaller incidents, the Triage Unit may also report to the Wildlife Response Officer.

Figure 3 identifies how the wildlife operational response should be managed in larger Level 3 incidents. This includes the appointment of a Wildlife Field Coordinator and Wildlife Triage Coordinator under the Wildlife Response Officer.

Figure 1: IMT structure for a Level 1 incident wildlife response

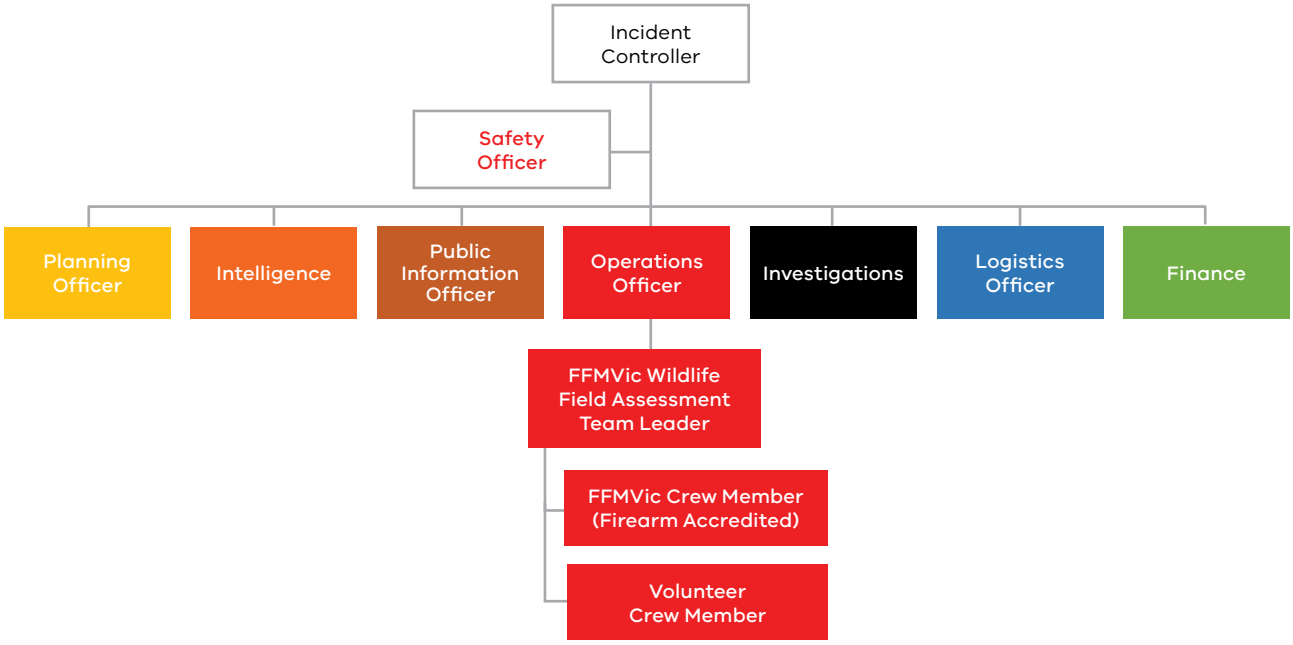


Figure 2: IMT structure for a Level 2 incident wildlife response

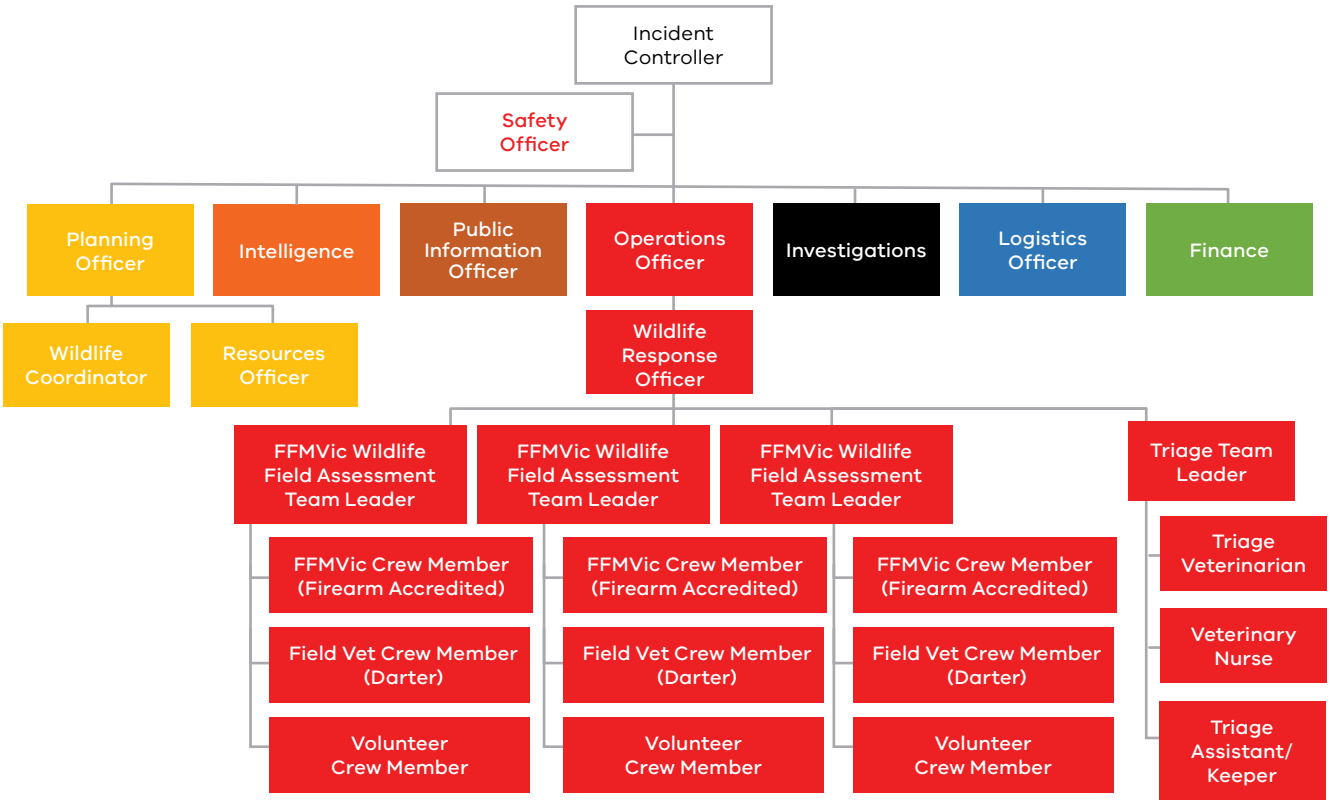
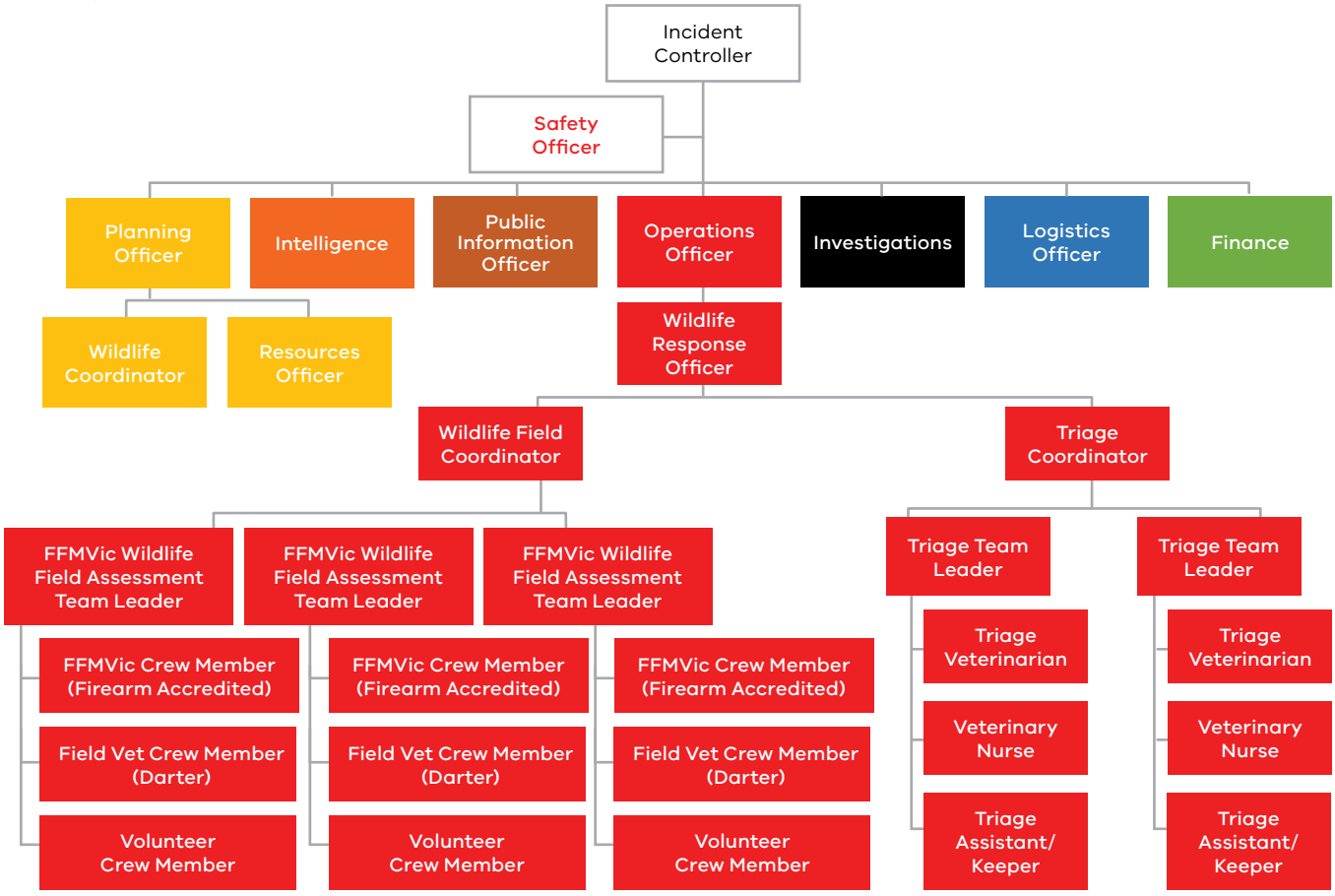


Figure 3: IMT structure for a Level 3 incident wildlife response



3.10 Wildlife response teams and roles

3.10.1 Planning Unit

3.10.1.1 Wildlife Coordinator

The Wildlife Coordinator works as a member of the Planning Unit to ensure that wildlife welfare response activities are developed and coordinated within the incident. They will provide the strategic direction and priorities for on ground activities which will be included in the *Incident Action Plan*. This will include:

- development of the *Wildlife Response Plan*
- determine the level of resourcing required and the requirement for the establishment of triage units
- work with the logistics unit to establish triage unit locations
- engage with authorised wildlife shelters and foster carers locally.

The Wildlife Coordinator will also ensure that the appropriate safety documentation is in place for field assessment and triage teams.

A Wildlife Coordinator should be appointed early in the response to assess the requirements of the wildlife response and develop the *Wildlife Response Plan*. This will be undertaken drawing on information from on ground fire teams , community intelligence, knowledge of local wildlife populations and habitats, as well as information on the location of and potential spread of the fire.

The appointment of a Wildlife Coordinator should occur early in the response to develop the *Wildlife Response Plan* and is undertaken by a trained and accredited FFMVic staff member.

3.10.2 Operations

Field based wildlife response activities will be incorporated into the Operations Section of the IMT under the direction of the Operations Officer.

In smaller incidents, Wildlife Field Assessment Teams may report to the Operations Officer or a Divisional Commander. The wildlife response structure has been designed to ensure appropriate chain of command in larger incidents. In this case a Wildlife Response Officer may be deployed reporting to the Operations Officer. This role is responsible for all field and triage activities. If required, the roles of Wildlife Field Coordinator and Wildlife Triage Coordinator may be established under the Wildlife Response Officer to ensure effective span of control and leadership of these two areas of response. The appointment of a Wildlife Triage Coordinator should be considered if more than one triage unit is established.

3.10.2.1 Wildlife Field Assessment Teams

FFMVic led Wildlife Field Assessment Teams will be deployed to undertake the on-ground observation and assessment of impacted wildlife, euthanasia or the capture and transportation of animals to a triage unit. Led by a Wildlife Team Leader, these teams will consist of a minimum of two to a maximum of four individuals.

Wildlife Field Assessment Team members must be trained and accredited and will be drawn from:

- FFMVic staff members (with relevant firearm accreditation)
- veterinarians (with relevant darting experience and authorisation)
- volunteer rehabilitators and rescuers.

When formally deployed, Wildlife Field Assessment Teams are recorded within Incident Action Plan (IAP) and shift plans.

The team structure will vary according to the size of the incident. The composition of teams is defined in Table 5. At some fire grounds, particularly smaller ones, the initial deployment of a Wildlife Field Assessment Team to manage any immediate known wildlife welfare issues may not initially include a volunteer. Once the deployed volunteer has arrived at the IMT and been briefed, they will be able to join their designated Wildlife Field Assessment Team.

Table 5: Wildlife Field Assessment Team composition

Incident Level	FFMVic Team Leader	FFMVic Crew Member (firearm accreditation)	Field Veterinarian	Volunteer
1	✓	✓		✓[1]
2	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓

1. Initial deployments may consist of two accredited FFMVic staff to undertake initial assessment. This team will be supplemented by an accredited volunteer when deployed through the IMT.

Wildlife Field Assessment Team Leaders will report to the Wildlife Response Officer or the Wildlife Field Coordinator (where established). As Wildlife Field Assessment Teams move across the fireground, they must ensure that this is in line with the Incident Action Plan. The team leaders must always engage with the relevant on ground Division Commander and follow their direction.

All teams must adhere to their assigned activities as defined in the *Wildlife Response Plan* and IAP and discussed in the deployment briefing. No team member is to undertake alternative activities. If the team needs to split, this must be approved by the Wildlife Response Officer or Operations Officer. The minimum team should be two individuals, and each should have communication equipment as set out in the IAP.

The composition of each team may vary between shifts based on:

- fire activity and fireground access
- supporting fire ground operations (such as road clearing or tree removal)
- intelligence from the public and fire crews
- planned wildlife response activities.

For example, where tree removal along a roadside is being undertaken and koalas have been sighted, a team with koala catching skills may be deployed to capture and relocate the koalas or take them to a triage unit for assessment. However, a mob of kangaroos observed near the fire ground may require an FFMVic staff member with the appropriate firearms accreditation and a veterinarian with dart gun accreditation.

3.10.2.2 Triage Unit

A Triage Team Leader will be responsible for the operation of the triage unit. They will ensure it is adequately resourced and that standard procedures and processes are maintained. The Triage Team Leader will report to the Wildlife Response Officer or the Wildlife Triage Coordinator (where established).

Only deployed veterinarians are able to assess and determine veterinary medical management procedures for injured wildlife. Only individuals with a degree in Veterinary Science, registered in Victoria, with an additional DELWP accreditation will be able to undertake this role. .

Veterinary nurses work in a supportive role to the triage veterinarian. Veterinary nurses undertake additional duties managing triage stock and assisting in record keeping and management within the triage unit.

Triage Assistants provide support to the effective running of the triage unit. Duties may include animal husbandry, sourcing of food items, animal observation and servicing. The triage assistant and triage veterinary team work collaboratively to ensure the efficient running of the triage unit. Triage assistants will be drawn from FFMVic and Zoos Victoria.

3.10.2.3 Transporters

In some cases, there may be the need for the transport of animals from the triage unit for ongoing medical care and rehabilitation. Volunteers may be utlised providing it is safe to do so and access is not restricted due to roadblocks or emergency response activity. This will occur at the request of the IMT, either locally by the triage coordinator or via a resource request to the WESN. These roles may be requested and deployed by the IMT as needed. A shift may only be for one day, transporting a small number of animals. A shift may only be for one day, transporting a small number of animals.

3.11 Volunteers

Trained and accredited volunteers can be deployed to assist in the search, assessment and capture of wildlife impacted by fire. This can only occur within established emergency management structures to maintain personal safety, prevent duplication of effort and ensure the efficient and effective use of resources.

The collective term "volunteer" for the purposes of this plan includes appropriately trained people who can be described as either an authorised shelter operator, rehabilitator, rescuer or transporter.

Only those that have completed the required training and accreditation can be deployed. Adherence to registration, communication and reporting procedures, as well as the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the adoption of hazard specific safety measures is required.

Volunteers involved in wildlife assessment operations are not permitted to be engaged in fire suppression activities or operate in proximity to active fire at any stage.

Volunteers do not receive any financial remuneration for their deployment. Meals and accommodation will be supplied at no cost. Depending on the distance from an individual's home to the incident, transport may also be arranged.

New or spontaneous volunteers are unable to be utilised during emergency events.

3.11.1 Sourcing volunteers

Trained and accredited wildlife rescuers or shelter operators can play an important role in operating under the direction of the IMT and working with FFMVic staff to assist with wildlife welfare assessments on fire grounds.

DELWP has entered a partnership with the WESN to train and coordinate volunteers.

This partnership will include the recruitment and training of experienced wildlife rehabilitators and rescuers to participate as members of field assessment teams.

Once accredited and approved, volunteers will be asked to provide personal details to enable them to be registered on DELWP's learning and fire deployment systems.

Further information on volunteering can be found at: https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/wildlife-emergencies/volunteering-during-wildlife-emergencies

3.12 FFMVic staff

FFMVic staff are deployed into wildlife roles through their regional structure. The IC will make formal requests for appropriately accredited and skilled staff to fill defined roles. Generally, each Region will try to fill these roles locally. However, at peak times and larger incidents, additional staff can be deployed from other regions. These requests will be submitted via the RAC, through the State Resource Request System (SRRS) to the SCC.

Personnel will only be committed to these roles if they are appropriately trained and equipped with the appropriate qualifications or authorisations.

3.13 Veterinary support

Veterinarians and veterinary nurses are integral in a successful wildlife response. Veterinarians can be utilised either in Wildlife Field Assessment Teams to assist in the assessment of wildlife and the chemical immobilisation of animals or undertaking detailed assessment and treatment of wildlife at designated triage units. Only individuals with a degree in Veterinary Science, registered in Victoria, with additional DELWP accreditation can be deployed into these roles.

The Triage Veterinarian role is responsible for the assessment, prognosis and treatment of all wildlife presented at the triage unit. Veterinarians are responsible for the management of, and the only triage team member legally allowed to, dispense scheduled drugs as per the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act (1981)* and *the Agriculture and Veterinary Chemicals (Victoria) Act (1994)*.

Activities at triage units are supported by both veterinary nurses and triage assistants who have undertaken relevant training and accreditation.

3.13.1 Initial veterinary support

In the early stages of a fire event, local veterinarians may need to be engaged to undertake immediate welfare assessment of a small number of impacted wildlife brought in by the Wildlife Field Assessment Team. When this occurs, the veterinarian will be able to access wildlife veterinary expertise through Zoos Victoria to assist in making the appropriate assessment of the injured animals. The cost of agreed services provided by the veterinarian will be covered by the IMT. Wildlife taken to private veterinary clinics by members of the public are not covered by this arrangement.

3.14 Wildlife Emergency Support Network

The Wildlife Emergency Support Network (WESN) is a partnership for the targeted recruitment, training, accreditation and pre deployment coordination of veterinary services and wildlife rehabilitator or rescue volunteers. Initially the WESN coordinator will be hosted by Zoos Victoria and is the key contact point for DELWP and partner organisations.

The WESN will supply trained and accredited individuals into defined wildlife emergency roles at the request of IMT, including:

- Veterinarians (field or triage unit based)
- Veterinary nurses
- Triage assistants (keepers)
- Wildlife volunteers (wildlife rehabilitators or rescuers).

This approach seeks individuals from across the wildlife welfare sector including ZV, RSPCA Victoria, Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), other veterinarians, veterinary nurses, Wildlife Victoria and wildlife rehabilitators and rescuers to participate in training and accreditation for possible deployment. It should be noted that training and accreditation does not guarantee deployment in a season or to any incident.

In this arrangement, DELWP retains responsibilities for wildlife welfare arising from fire events as defined in the SEMP. DELWP defines the standards and training requirements, which will be developed in collaboration with ZV.

Development and delivery of accredited training is managed jointly between DELWP and WESN Coordinator. This training will be competency based, requiring participants to demonstrate the required skills and pass defined assessment tasks. Confirmation of health and physical fitness will also be required at the time of deployment.

As the WESN is a new concept, it will be evaluated in June 2021, with key performance indicators established. These will be reviewed annually.

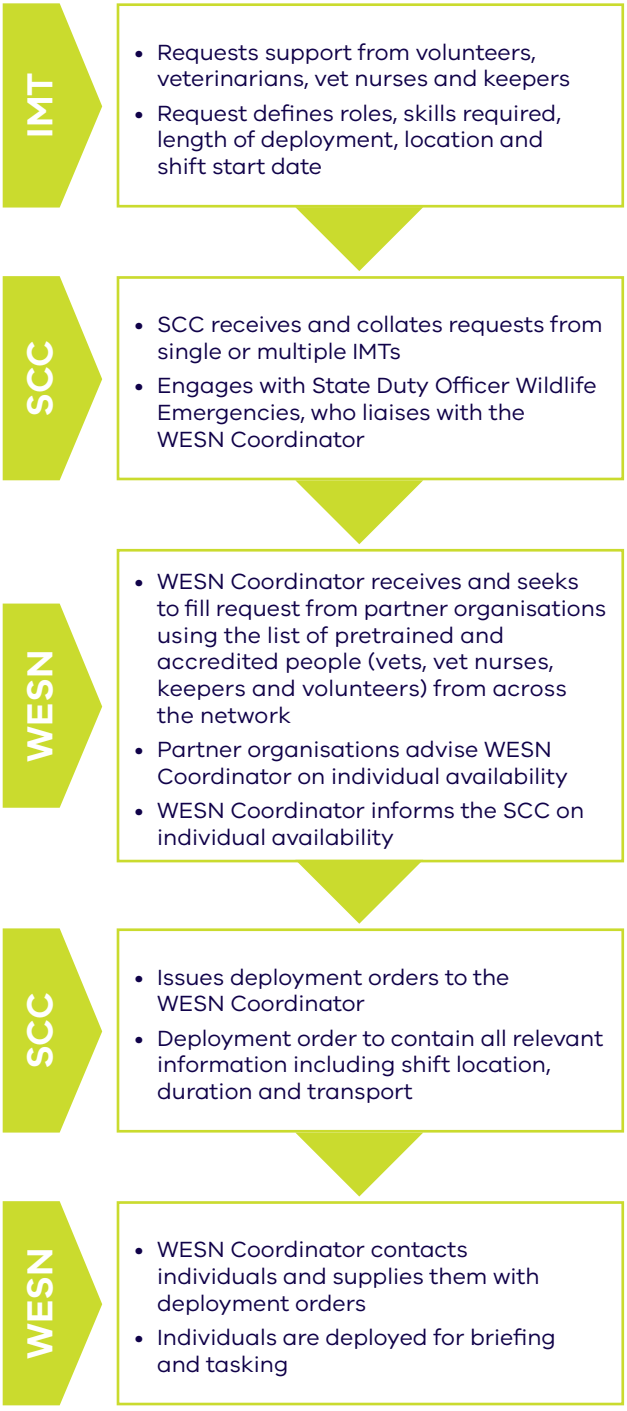
3.14.1 Deployment process

The wildlife welfare response during fire is managed by the IMT, with Wildlife Field Assessment Teams and Triage Units led and managed by trained and accredited FFMVic staff. When the Wildlife Coordinator within the IMT determines that veterinary and volunteer resources are required, a request will be made to the State Control Centre.

The request is then sent via the State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies to the WESN Coordinator. The WESN Coordinator will then seek to fulfil the request by engaging with partner organisations to identify accredited individuals within the network and confirm this with the State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies.

The SCC will provide deployment details such as location, shift length, transport and any other relevant details back to the WESN Coordinator. A diagram of this process shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Deployment process of personnel through the Wildlife Emergency Support Network



Where appointed, the Class 2 State Controller will be engaging with the Wildlife Welfare Sector Liaison for feedback from the wildlife welfare sector.

4. Standards

4.1 Workplace Health and Safety

DELWP is committed to meeting its workplace safety obligations for all personnel involved in fire response operations as required under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (the OHS Act).

Under Section 21 of the OHS Act, employers have an obligation to 'provide such information, instruction, training or supervision to employees of the employer as is necessary to enable those persons to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health.' This obligation is extended to engaged contractors and volunteers deployed directly by an agency.

The safety, health and welfare of incident personnel, including volunteers, is always the overarching priority for fire agencies. Safety will not be compromised to undertake any single activity.

The OHS Act also requires that while at work, employees must take reasonable care for their own safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions. They must also cooperate with any actions taken by their employer to comply with the OHS Act and regulations.

An employee must not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided at the workplace in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

DELWP recognises that emergency incidents present an inherently dangerous workplace that provides workplace health and safety challenges that would not normally be encountered in the workplace. For this reason, the "Safe Person Approach" is adopted to ensure individuals are as safe as possible within the dynamic working environment encountered during fire response operations.

This approach includes a commitment that ICs, Agency Commanders and Incident Management Teams must direct their efforts to making personnel safe by adopting the following measures:

- systematically identifying, assessing and treating hazards and OHS risks
- ensuring only adequately trained and competent personnel participate in incident operations
- ensuring risk and near miss reporting and mitigation processes are systematically employed
- ensuring safety is an integral part of the Incident Action Plan, orders and briefings
- having safe systems of work
- having recognition by all people working at the incident (including volunteers and contractors) of their specific responsibility to deliver a safe working environment, and
- ensuring personnel are issued with and use appropriate personnel protective equipment.

4.1.1 Safety principles

The health and safety of personnel is the overarching principle in the development and implementation of all policies and procedures contained in this manual. Wildlife emergency response work carries inherent risks, some of which are significant. Hazards specific to wildlife affected by fire include:

- slips, trips and falls
- onsite safety issues including tree hazards, vehicle issues (accidents, breakdown, bogging) , remote area safety issues, getting lost, etc.
- exposure to heat, wind and sun
- fatigue
- critical incident stress
- compassion fatigue
- injury inflicted by equipment or animals
- illness or disease transmitted by contact with animals
- handling and use of firearms
- handling and use of scheduled drugs.

The safety principles of wildlife emergency response are:

- human safety is the highest priority, never place wildlife welfare above human safety
- never succumb to pressure to initiate an action that has not been thoroughly thought through
- always keep lines of communication open
- approach all wildlife with caution as their behaviour can be unpredictable and potentially harmful, particularly when injured or stressed.

All operational activities must comply with relevant departmental OHS standards and guidelines.

A Job Safety Plan must be prepared at the commencement of an incident. Relevant activity specific Job Safety Plans including Safe Work Procedures (SWPs), or Safe Work Management Statements (SWMSs) and Safe Operating Instructions (SOIs) must be in place and adhered to.

If an incident cannot be appropriately assessed and implemented by appropriately qualified individuals under the umbrella of a properly established incident control structure, a response will not be initiated.

4.2 Incident reports

Any safety and wellbeing incidents or near misses must be reported immediately. Details must be recorded on an OHS Incident Report Card which must then be logged in the DELWP incident reporting system by the Logistics or Medical Services Unit (depending on the size of the event) and reported up to the IC.

4.3 Fatigue

The DELWP Fatigue Management Safety Procedure outlines the risk control strategies to be adopted to minimise the contribution of fatigue to workplace injury and illness.

In emergency situations the IC must ensure that shifts are planned and managed to minimise the impact of fatigue on crew safety. Volunteers may have alternate arrangements including shorter shifts and deployments than FFMVic staff.

Fatigue hazards include:

- schedules that require regular shifts of 14 hours or more in a 24-hour period over extended periods (e.g. over a week, fortnight, month)
- schedules that do not allow the opportunity for a minimum 7 hours continuous break for sleep in 24 hours
- long working weeks that do not allow at least one break of 24 hours in 7 days or two 24-hour breaks spread over 14 days
- schedules that involve night work and limited opportunity to break for a short sleep or power nap
- unpredictable rosters that allow little notice for the workers to prepare for or adjust to the schedule
- working conditions (e.g. exposure to heat, cold, wind and water) that increase mental fatigue.

Controls must include:

- building regular breaks into the tasks being performed when practicable and safe to do so
- adopting the Department's Driver Safety Procedure to control driving risks when fatigued
- providing a break of at least 10 hours between completion of a shift and commencement of the next shift
- planning shifts of 12–14 hours duration to a maximum of 16 hours, including travel
- limiting tour of duty with extended shifts and staying away from home to 7 days, including travel, with appropriate rest days post the 7-day working period
- ideally limiting consecutive night shifts to a maximum of four.

Shifts should not exceed 16 hours without prior authorisation from the IC.

4.4 Zoonotic disease

All personnel working with wildlife should be aware of the potential for zoonotic disease and the development of appropriate safety measures should be considered when planning the wildlife response. Basic hygiene precautions and safe animal handling measures (wearing gloves when touching animals, skill in animal handling to avoid bites and scratches) can be protective in most cases.

However, there are certain conditions of which it is particularly important to be mindful of when encountering certain species.

For example, there is a risk that humans may contract sarcoptic mange through handling wombats or koalas or the risk of exposure to Australian Bat *Lyssavirus*, which is a potentially fatal rabies-like virus, through bites or scratches from infected flying foxes or microbats.

4.5 Critical incident stress

A critical incident is any situation that causes personnel to experience strong emotional reactions that have the potential to impair their ability to function either at the time of the incident or afterwards.

Critical incidents may involve:

- serious injury or death
- extraordinary and prolonged expenditures of physical and emotional energy
- serious physical or psychological threat or sudden loss
- unusually distressing and emotional situations.

Emergencies involving injured wildlife are considered critical incidents as there is a strong emotional imperative to intervene. However, the desire or impulse to do so immediately may have the potential to impair rational judgement, place team members at risk and compromise the success of wildlife operations.

Awareness of critical incident stress is an important part of emergency response training. Staff, contractors and volunteers participating in wildlife assessment operations should be aware of the signs of stress in themselves or others. They should advise the relevant supervisor or the IC if they believe anyone is affected. The IC must ensure appropriate action is undertaken to support the affected individuals.

4.6 Support services

The department provides a range of support services for staff, contractors and volunteers involved in emergency management including:

- Critical Incident Stress Management Team and Hotline
- external counselling services
- peer support
- *Working in an Emergency* handbook.

DELWP provides a range of support services for staff involved in emergency management including:

- peer support
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) via phone or face-to face off site counselling services.

The EAP is available for all staff and volunteers and should be promoted at each shift briefing as a preventative tool.

4.7 Medicals and fitness

Only trained and qualified FFMVic personnel, with an appropriate medical (Fit for Emergency) accreditation and physical accreditation (Task Based Assessment) appropriate to the task assigned, should be deployed in wildlife emergency incident operations. Where a medical assessment and or physical endorsement have been identified as essential to undertake a role, only individuals who have a current medical and physical endorsement for that role can be deployed.

Contractors and volunteers will be asked to sign a health declaration at the commencement of each deployment. Where they are unable or unwilling to sign the declaration, they will not be deployed.

4.8 Insurance

4.8.1 Zoos Victoria employees and contractors

Veterinarians and vet nurses deployed through the Wildlife Emergency Support Network, will be contracted through ZV as either casuals or on fixed term contracts will be covered by Zoos Victoria WorkCover Insurance.

4.8.2 Volunteers

Like FFMVic staff, volunteers working with DELWP under supervision and performing a role in the Incident Management structure are the responsibility of the Secretary of DELWP.

In the event of incurring an injury during deployment, the following financial support is available for volunteers:

- Incorporated volunteer organisations may have their own public liability and personal accident insurance. If involved they should present their certificate of currency before commencing activities.
- A scheme for the payment of compensation to volunteer emergency workers upon personal injury or property damage is set out in Part 6 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986*.
- Volunteers may be covered under the Department's personal accident insurance through Victorian Managed Insurance Agency (VMIA). Volunteers must be registered and sign in and out during each shift.

4.9 Training and accreditation

DELWP has legal obligations to protect the safety and wellbeing of employees, contractors and volunteers under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*. Volunteers, like employees, need to be provided with the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to enable them to perform their work safely and without risks to health.

In order to be deployed to assist wildlife field assessment activities, individuals must be appropriately trained and accredited. DELWP or an approved partner may deliver this training, with training records being held by DELWP. In addition, some roles or activities may have a currency requirement, whereby an individual may have to either refresh their training or skill set or demonstrate their knowledge in a specific role.

To be deployed onto a fireground as part of a field assessment team, all individuals must have current training accreditation in the following courses:

- DELWP's Basic Wildfire Awareness and Tree Hazard Identification accreditation
- DELWP's Field assessment of wildlife impacted by fire course.

To be deployed into a wildlife triage unit, all individuals must have current training accreditation in the following DELWP course:

- DELWP's Basic Wildfire Awareness and Tree Hazard Identification accreditation
- Clinical assessment and care of wildlife impacted by fire course.

4.10 Personal Protective Equipment

All Wildlife Field Assessment Teams must be appropriately equipped when being deployed to the fire ground with standard fire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Volunteers and field based veterinarians operating on the fireground must be equipped in appropriate PPE supplied by DELWP and ZV.

It is essential that this equipment is not substituted for other PPE which may not meet minimum safety standards. A set of PPE will be provided to individuals following the successful completion of their training. Veterinarians and volunteers will be provided with red overalls as shown in Figure 5.

Additional PPE related to the use of firearms and handling of wildlife will be issued as needed. Disposable PPE required in the triage unit such as surgical gloves, face masks, aprons and eye protection will be sourced by the logistics unit at the incident and be provided as required.

Wildlife Field Assessment Team leaders will also be provided with a tabard to identify themselves and the team on the fireground. This is shown in Figure 6.

The required PPE will be communicated to individuals when they are deployed. This will be checked by their team leader at the commencement of each shift. Any individual arriving in inappropriate clothing or missing specified equipment will not be deployed.

Figure 5: Image of FFMVic volunteer overalls

Figure 6: Wildlife Field Assessment Team Leader tabard

4.11 Firearms – including darting

Firearms are regulated in Victoria under the *Firearms Act 1996* (the Firearms Act). This includes the use, carrying and access to firearms.

Only staff from DELWP, DJPR or PV with a Category A or B firearms licence that have undertaken and hold their agency firearms accreditation will be permitted to carry and use firearms on the fire ground. They are also responsible for the secure handling and storage of firearms overnight or in between shifts. Where deployed, only registered veterinarians holding a Category C firearms licence will be able to carry and use dart guns and appropriate sedatives used in the firearm.

Use of firearms on the fireground must comply with all relevant legislation and be endorsed by the IC. All fire operations teams must be aware that firearms may be in use on or adjacent to the fireground. On the commencement of shift, or on moving to a different sector on the fire ground, it is essential that wildlife welfare teams engage with other operational team leaders in area in which they are operating and discuss the use of firearms.

4.12 Scheduled drugs

Management and the security of scheduled drugs at triage units is the responsibility of the Triage Veterinarian. This includes all appropriate records management relating to Schedule 8 (S8) drugs and euthanasia solution.

Drugs will be ordered and supplied through ZV and follow a documented process for the order, dispatch and handling to the triage unit. During shift changeovers, the outgoing Triage Veterinarian is responsible for undertaking a stocktake and providing a handover to the incoming Triage Veterinarian. This must include the physical transfer of relevant records and keys.

At the conclusion of the incident, all drugs will be returned to ZV for stocktake and storage.

4.13 Record keeping and data

4.13.1 Public reporting of injured wildlife

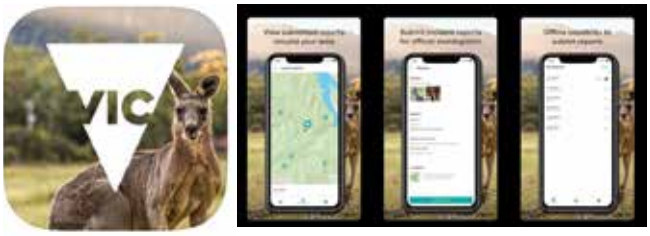
Members of the pubic who come across injured or displaced wildlife due to fire can report these animals directly to DELWP via the Wildlife Emergency app or by phone. These are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Methods for reporting wildlife information during fires

Method	Details
App	Wildlife Emergency App (download from Google Play or Apple Store)
Phone	DELWP on 136 186 Wildlife Victoria (WV) on 03 8400 7300 Fire IMT via 1300 number (established by the IMT and used in locally)

The Wildlife Emergency app which can be downloaded from either the Google Play store or the Apple store allows individuals to describe and geolocate the animal by dropping a pin, as well as to upload a photo. This information is sent directly to DELWP for response.

Figure 7: DELWP Wildlife Emergency App



Alternatively, members of the public can report injured wildlife by phone to either the DELWP or WV call enters. Both DELWP and WV will record this information directly into the wildlife response system for follow up by the Wildlife Field Assessment Teams deployed to the fire.

When the IMT is established and a Wildlife Coordinator deployed, a 1300 number will be allocated to that incident. This number will be promoted across the affected community and will allow them to report wildlife concerns directly to the Wildlife Coordinator.

4.13.2 Wildlife Assessment and treatment records

All animals observed, assessed or treated must have the appropriate records created within the DELWP emergency records system. These records will be created electronically by both the field assessment and triage teams and will be held by DELWP. These records will form part of the incident response. Where animals are held over the short term at triage units, they must have daily veterinary medical record and appropriate daily husbandry/ feeding records.

4.13.3 Other records

Other records that must be kept include:

- S8 drug and euthanasia solution management records
- firearm management records.

4.14 Traffic management points

Victoria Police are permitted to implement a full or partial road closure at a traffic management point where it is deemed necessary. This is usually requested by the IC.

Under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958,* Victoria Police are obliged to act on the instructions of the Chief Officer or IC of a fire agency and enforce their instructions. Under agreed protocols, discretion is granted to police to stop people from entering a full road closure or partial road closure area.

The passage of Wildlife Field Assessment Teams through traffic management points will be in accordance with the approved traffic management plan authorised by the Incident Controller. Individuals or wildlife groups who are not part of the formal wildlife response under the IMT will not be permitted to pass through traffic management points.

4.15 Working at night

Wildlife assessment operations will not be permitted at night unless approved by the IC and in accordance with designated shift periods.

If approved, this will only be permitted to be carried out along specific roads and formed tracks that have been identified in the IAP. Walking through the bush at night off-road is considered too dangerous due to hazardous trees and potential for mine shafts or cliff falls trips and other hazards.

Split shifts should be considered over the dawn and dusk periods as these are considered better times to locate wildlife. If this is to occur, it must be approved by the IC and included in the IAP.

4.16 Communication

Wildlife Field Assessment Teams will be equipped with standard or portable radios. The Communications Plan in the IAP will define incident channels determined and allocated by the IMT. This plan will also document which radios have been allocated to which teams and designated channels for their use.

Team Leaders will ensure all team members are briefed in the use of the equipment including safety aspects.

No team should be on the fire ground without appropriate communication equipment.

4.17 Access to the fire ground

It is prohibited for any persons, including contractors or volunteers formally deployed in wildlife assessment or triage operations, to access the fire ground without the prior approval of the IC. This will be determined by the IC and included in the IAP. This will not occur until the tree hazard assessment and treatment is completed for the areas to be accessed by the Wildlife Field Assessment Teams.

The IC may grant permission to deployed teams to access the fire ground when it or sections of it are deemed safe for wildlife assessment to be undertaken. This will have included checking for dangerous and falling trees, hotspots and damaged roads and infrastructure.

In larger fires, it is possible that access to part of the fire ground may be granted while the fire is still classed as "going". The areas of the fire ground available to be searched by the wildlife teams will be clearly defined in the IAP.

4.18 Access to private land

Access to private land requires land manager approval. However, if entry to private property is required to directly assess injured wildlife, this can only be undertaken without land manager approval by authorised officers appointed as a Prevention Of Cruelty To Animals (POCTA) Inspector under section 18 of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*.

5. Wildlife response procedures

This section outlines the procedures, standards and processes of the different elements of the wildlife response to be applied by all individuals and organisations participating in the response. The objective is to respond to the welfare needs of impacted wildlife when safe to do so, following a fire. This is done by:

- Conducting field-based searches for wildlife on and adjacent to the fireground
- Conducting and recording visual assessments of wildlife
- Undertaking interventions to address wildlife welfare issues including euthanasia
- Capturing and transferring injured wildlife for veterinary assessment and care
- Monitoring wildlife populations within the affected areas.

5.1 Initial assessment and activation

Not all fires will require a wildlife response, as some are slow to spread, have a small footprint, or are extinguished quickly.

Upon notification of a fire a "first attack" fire crew will be deployed to locate the fire, undertake an initial assessment and commence suppression activities if it safe to do so. The officer in charge on the fireground will provide an initial assessment to the Incident Management Team of the fire including if wildlife have been, or have the potential to be, impacted.

If wildlife have or may be impacted, a Wildlife Coordinator will be deployed to the IMT and an initial Wildlife Field Assessment Team stood up to respond to immediate wildlife welfare issues or to do further fireground assessments if safe to do so. Generally, this will be a Level 1 type response.

From time to time, fire crews may come across smaller wildlife such as koalas and possums that can be caught and handled. If this is the case, and the fire conditions permit, they should place any such animals in a covering or bag and report through their chain of command for direction on how the animal will be removed from the fire ground. The Wildlife Field Assessment Team can arrange to collect the animals at a safe location for further assessment.

The Wildlife Field Assessment Team will also check for and assess injured animals that may have moved to unburnt private or public land outside the fire zone.

5.2 Response planning

The *Wildlife Response Plan* will be the key reference document to guide wildlife response throughout the incident. Reporting to the Planning Officer, the Wildlife Coordinator will work with the Planning Team to consider:

- Priority sites within or adjacent to the fire ground
- Priority species or populations that may occur within the fire footprint
- Feedback and reports on wildlife from fire crews on the fire ground and from the public
- The proposed scale of the wildlife response, including the number and composition of Wildlife Field Assessment Teams and the location and establishment of a triage unit
- Messaging for informing the local community about wildlife impacts.

Planning should consider the need for field-based veterinarians and specialist teams (e.g. koala catching teams), depending on the location of the fire and the impacted species. It should also consider the need for veterinary care and rehabilitation, including specialist rehabilitators and local rehabilitator capacity to care for wildlife following triage.

When planning and developing the process and location to release wildlife, the scope of habitat destruction and known population densities must be considered.

Once approved by the Incident Controller, the *Wildlife Response Plan* will define the number of Wildlife Field Assessment Teams and the number and location of triage units.

Wildlife assessment operations must be set out in each Incident Action Plan as per all other incident operations. This will include the names and of individual agency and volunteer personnel, communication protocols and their role and location for each shift. They should also include safety instructions, and information about exclusion zones and warnings.

These work instructions will be provided to teams at the briefing at the start of each shift. Depending on the location of the teams, this may be part of the wider operations briefing or an individual unit briefing. All team members are expected to follow these work instructions and any modification or warnings that are issued by the IC over the course of the shift.

5.2.1 Equipment

The IMT will arrange the required equipment to undertake the various roles, including equipment for the Wildlife Field Assessment Team. There is no expectation for volunteers to bring or supply equipment other than their PPE. Triage units will be established utilising DELWP triage kits, supplemented with consumables supplied through Zoos Victoria.

The IMT may source other equipment owned by community groups or agencies such as mobile veterinary clinics. In these situations, a lease agreement will be put in place by the IMT's Logistics Unit. These resources would then fall under the management of the IMT for the period of the agreement, staffed and run by accredited teams deployed by the IMT.

5.2.2 Carcass disposal

The IMT needs to consider the disposal of carcasses and these arrangements need to be in place early in the response phase. Under Victoria's emergency management arrangements, municipal councils are responsible for the coordination of clean-up activities including disposal of dead animals under advice from DJPR. Approved municipal animal waste facilities should be utilised where possible. In some cases, a commercial contractor may be engaged by the IMT to undertake carcass disposal.

Where livestock and companion animals have been impacted as well as wildlife, DJPR and DELWP should work together to ensure a single streamlined approach to carcass disposal.

It is impractical to attempt to remove all carcasses from the fire ground and single carcasses of animals killed by the fire or euthanised by firearm can be left in situ. Removal may need to occur in some circumstances including:

- many carcasses in one location
- proximity to communities and roads
- carcasses in or near waterways including potable water supplies
- potential for disease spread
- euthanised with euthanasia solution.

5.3 Euthanasia

Euthanasia of wildlife impacted by fire should be undertaken where the health and wellbeing of the animal is significantly compromised, where invasive or long-term medical intervention would otherwise be required or if survival is unlikely. These decisions must be consistent with the *Wildlife Shelter and Foster Carer Authorisation Guide*.

Impacted animals whose prognosis or welfare is further compromised by the presence of pre-existing health issues should also be euthanised based on veterinary advice. Larger wildlife that are injured and cannot be handled safely, as well as all impacted pest animals should be euthanised.

Euthanasia in the field should be undertaken by firearm for most wildlife. Barbiturates should not be used in the field to euthanise large wildlife but may be used for the euthanasia of smaller animals, where the carcass can be removed from the fireground and disposed of appropriately.

All euthanised female animals must be examined for pouch young, evidence of dependent young and the immediate area should be searched for young at foot. Where young are found, a decision must then be made on the appropriate course of action depending on the age of the young (either euthanised or transferred to an appropriately qualified and registered rehabilitator for rehabilitation).

For injured larger animals where capture and transport is not feasible, or for injured animals that are likely to be in significant pain, euthanasia should be carried out promptly on site.

5.4 Fire ground assessment of wildlife

The *Wildlife Response Plan* and IAP will define the priority areas for the teams to systematically search for wildlife. These areas are required to have risk assessments, including tree hazard assessments completed prior to deployment. Priorities will be identified in these plans and documented in maps as needed.

The focus of the fire ground search is to observe and assess wildlife for burns and other injuries sustained during the fire and appropriately manage the welfare of each animal. Teams should also create assessment records for healthy wildlife identified in the landscape and their location, as well as those that have been displaced as a result of the fire.

If teams come across livestock or companion animals, they should be reported to the Wildlife Response Officer for communication to Agriculture Victoria. Unmanaged animals such as deer and introduced pest species that have been injured should be euthanised.

The number and type of animals affected, and the severity of their injuries will vary depending on the species, where they were located and the intensity of the fire. It is not uncommon to find that some animals on the fire ground are uninjured. Animals on fire grounds may need ongoing observation and assessment to monitor for other signs of impacts such as malnutrition and reduced access to water resources.

Undertaking assessments in the field can be challenging and may need to be undertaken some distance away from the animal to avoid disturbance. Wildlife can mask the signs of pain, injury and illness, as a survival mechanism. Careful observation by experienced wildlife personnel is required in these situations.

No veterinary treatments should be undertaken in the field. If further veterinary assessment is required, the animal will be transfered to the Triage Unit.

5.4.1 Monitoring of wildlife

In many cases, it is difficult to properly assess individual animals. Animals may not show clinical signs of injures such as burns or smoke inhalation, for some time following the fire. Injuries from deep burns can be so severe that nerve endings are damaged, and the animal may not feel the associated pain. For example, it is possible for a kangaroo with severely burnt hind feet to continue hopping, with impacted gait, but it may still move away with the mob when disturbed.

Individual animals or mobs may require further assessment and monitoring over a number of days.

Figure 8: Example of DELWP wildlife tape

In these situations, the location must be recorded and the area or tree where the animal is first seen is marked to assist in locating the animal or group in coming days. The closest tree or an object in the adjoining area can be marked with printed "Wildlife DELWP" tape (see Figure 8).

The Assessment Record for that observation should also be identified for a further assessment in the coming day. Photos and detailed information on the animals and their behaviour should also be recorded.

An electronic assessment record must be completed for every animal or group of animals assessed including those that are uninjured and require no further action as well as those that are captured, euthanised, transferred to triage or die from injuries post capture. In addition to the location and species of the animal, observations of its condition, injuries and behaviour should be recorded. The assessment record also allows images to be recorded.

5.4.2 Capture of wildlife

Assessment of injured wildlife will consider the appropriate action to manage the welfare issues of the individual animal based on safety considerations, observable injures and operational factors.

The process for capturing, handling and transporting the animal must be planned in advance. This plan will be influenced by the species of the animal, its injuries and mobility as well as its location. Critical to this is consideration of the safety of the Wildlife Field Assessment Team and minimising further injury or stress to the animal.

Activities to capture animals that place team members at risk of injury will not be undertaken until safety hazards are mitigated. Approaches to capture animals which lead to further stress or injury of the animal should not be undertaken.

5.4.3 Chemical immobilisation of wildlife

Chemical immobilisation of larger animals on the fire ground for closer inspection of injures can only be undertaken by a veterinarian with the appropriate training, accreditation and authorisations to use a dart gun. This activity must be approved within the IAP.

Based on the assessment, if these animals are uninjured and can be released, they must be monitored as the immobilisation drugs wear off. Animals that meet the criteria for euthanasia, should be euthanised via firearm.

5.4.4 Transportation of wildlife

Animals waiting to be transported should be housed in an appropriate container which is then placed in a shaded and cool area. This may be under the shade of a tree or on the shaded side of a vehicle. The time between capture and transport should be minimised whenever possible and the trip from the fireground to the triage unit should be as short as possible. These animals should not be left unattended while waiting for transport.

Animals should be transported at ambient temperatures, and temperature extremes should be avoided as they can cause additional stress. No animal is to be transported in the boot of a sedan or on an uncovered utility tray. Animals must be protected from direct sunlight whilst in vehicles.

Ventilation between enclosures and around the animal is critical. Sheets may be used to cover the cage to reduce light but still permit ventilation. They can be sprayed with water to assist in evaporative cooling. Water can be offered by a bowl and allowing the animal to consume of their own accord whilst awaiting transport. Water should be removed prior to transportation.

Noise should be kept to a minimum during travel. This includes radio noise and humans talking.

Animal transport crates must be cleaned between use using detergent and water, and once air dried, sprayed with a disinfectant (F10SC solution® or diluted bleach solution) before rinsing and air drying prior to use for another animal. If using F10SC solution, rinsing is not required.

5.4.5 Relocation of wildlife

Fire events and the subsequent response activities often result in displaced wildlife. Following appropriate capture and assessment, if an animal is considered fit for release, it may be relocated. This may occur for a range of reasons including moving them out of harm's way (for example busy roads) or to areas that have not been impacted with the appropriate food resources. Uninjured animals will not be taken into care or moved beyond their home range.

5.5 Triage units

The purpose of the triage unit is to provide a secure facility to undertake a thorough veterinary assessment of animals captured from fire grounds to determine treatment priority and undertake veterinary intervention including euthanasia where indicated.

Following triage and treatment, animals may be:

- provided short term supportive care prior to release
- released immediately where a veterinarian has determined the animal fit for release
- transferred to ZV for specialised veterinary care
- transferred to a registered wildlife rehabilitator for further care, prior to release.

The most common species requiring triage and treatment within Victoria are koalas, possums and gliders, birds and kangaroo joeys. Small macropods and reptiles are not encountered as frequently.

5.5.1 Establishment and location of triage units

There are a range of factors that will determine the location of the triage unit. These include ease of access by vehicles, proximity to the fire ground and the ability for the IMT to provide appropriate logistics support. Consideration will also be given to the species most likely to be impacted, how many wildlife are likely to be brought in and where they are to be found in the fire footprint.

This information will also drive operational decisions about transport, appropriate animal crates and enclosures, supplies and information on appropriate wildlife rehabilitators with experience to care for specific species.

Triage units will not be open to the community, however injured wildlife will be received from members of the public.

5.6 Rehabilitation and release

Animals assessed as fit for release post veterinary examination at the triage unit can be transferred to Wildlife Field Assessment Team for release back into the wild. The release site should be within their home range provided it is safe with an available and sustainable food source.

Animals assessed as requiring ongoing support and rehabilitation should be transferred to experienced local rehabilitators for care until fit for release. The decision regarding where to send wildlife post assessment rests with the Triage Team Leader. Animals assessed as requiring ongoing, specialised veterinary care must be transferred to Zoos Victoria.

The Triage Team will contact identified rehabilitators to collect animals from the triage unit. Upon being contacted to collect an animal, the rehabilitator will attend the triage unit and be briefed by the veterinarian as to the condition of the animal and its required care. There may be cases that are managed as outpatients, that return to triage units for follow up veterinary care.

Rehabilitators must ensure that individual animal treatment plans are followed and that the animal is reassessed as directed by a registered veterinarian at regular intervals.

Information on the animals placed into care and the rehabilitators who receive them will be communicated to the regional staff from the Office of the Conservation Regulator as they will be the key contact point and track each animal's rehabilitation and release once the IMT and triage unit close.

5.6.1 Pre-release veterinary assessment

It is recommended that a veterinarian that has been involved in providing the veterinary care to the injured animal in the rehabilitation phase, is involved in the pre-release assessment of the animal. This assessment should consider all elements outlined in the release guidelines in the Wildlife Shelter and Foster Carer Authorisation Guide. These guidelines indicate that an animal that is suitable for release should be able to survive in the wild. Animals should also be released within their home range.

To assist in determining fitness for release, wildlife is ready for release when it:

- exhibits full recovery from the original injury or illness
- has no permanent physical impairment that may affect its chances of survival in the wild
- is able to tolerate outside conditions and its natural food sources
- no longer requires medical care
- exhibits no signs of active disease
- has fur, plumage or waterproofing (where applicable) that is adequate for that species to survive
- has adequate vision to find and catch food and manoeuvre in a normal manner
- exhibits locomotive skills necessary for that species to survive
- exhibits normal behaviour responses (i.e. an instinctual fear of humans and predators, able to forage and process food, find or construct shelter, mark its territory and move across the landscape with confidence)
- is of correct age for independent survival
- is of correct weight for that sex, species, age and season
- has been checked by a veterinarian/person experienced in the species for any diseases that may be transmitted to native populations and been cleared.

5.7 Supplementary feeding

Following extensive fires, there is often concern about the ability of wildlife to survive when food sources may be depleted. Feeding of wildlife is generally not recommended as it can cause a range of issues for the existing and recovering environment, wildlife and community members, including:

- wildlife becoming dependent on people for food and not dispersing away from fire-affected areas or undertaking normal foraging behaviours
- dietary deficiencies or harmful foods impacting animal welfare
- transferring diseases between wildlife
- creating weed problems from unsterilised feed
- attracting predators and pests to feeding sites, resulting in negative impacts on wildlife through predation and competition for resources
- favouring aggressive species or individuals leading to unnatural densities and disadvantaging more threatened species
- wildlife becoming a nuisance and acting aggressively towards people to obtain food.

For these reasons, members of the public should not undertake the supplementary feeding of wildlife.

Supplementary feeding will rarely be undertaken post fire. If it occurs, it will be a targeted program focused on a specific and localised species.

The need for targeted feeding for specific species will be based on intelligence from the fireground, consultation with wildlife specialists and scientific advice. The appropriate food required for supplementation, method of delivery and duration of the program will be monitored to measure its effectiveness.

5.7.1 Provision of water

Wildlife may seek alternative water sources following a fire. This includes freshwater containers, tanks, troughs and backyard pools.

The provision freshwater for wildlife should be delivered in a bowl or container that they can freely access. Large containers, pools and tanks should be equipped with branches and draped with hessian or fabric on the edge to ensure animals can climb out if they fall in.

The provision of water via drinking bottles can be dangerous for animals and result in fluid entering the animal's lungs. To avoid unnecessary harm, water must be poured into a bowl or other suitable container. This should be left near the animal to allow it to drink at will.

Further information on supplementary feeding and provision of water for wildlife can be found at https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/wildlife-emergencies/wildlife-fire-emergencies.

6. Public communications

For any fire incident, the provision of timely and accurate information to the community is critical. In the early stages of a fire, the IMT will be focused on communicating safety and warning messages to impacted and surrounding areas. As the fire situation becomes clearer, communication messaging will change and include information on wildlife where appropriate.

Dissemination of information to the wider community is important to the success of wildlife response operations as it may assist with:

- information gathering to support the response
- obtaining assistance from the public
- managing the safety of community members
- managing the media and public response to the incident.

The public and the media should receive accurate and timely information on wildlife response operations. Information supplied to the media and to the public should include:

- the roles of the various agencies involved in the wildlife response and number of personnel participating
- what actions are being taken with respect to wildlife and the justification
- outline what the public can do to help
- outline the risks of inexperienced or untrained people handling wildlife and discourage this from happening
- information on reporting injured wildlife to the IMT via the allocated 1300 number or via the electronic app or the DELWP or Wildlife Victoria call centres.

6.1 Engagement with the community

DELWP supported by wildlife welfare organisations will provide information to the wider community on wildlife welfare preparedness and response arrangements in Victoria. This will utilise multiple channels and include the provision of printed material, information on the DELWP wildlife website (https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/wildlife-emergencies/wildlife-fire-emergencies), fact sheets and through social media.

A 1300 number will be established within each IMT for the Wildlife Coordinator and used in local media and community newsletters.

Wildlife welfare organisations will have access to the same information that is produced by the relevant emergency response agencies, to enable them to communicate this effectively through their channels to ensure that there is consistent messaging at a local or incident level.

6.2 Incident Management Team communications

The Public Information Officer (PIO) role situated within the Public Information Unit of the IMT is responsible for collecting relevant incident information and providing updates and briefings to the community and other agencies and organisations involved, as requested by the IC.

The Wildlife Coordinator will work with the PIO to develop or access and disseminate previously endorsed key messages on the impact of the incident on wildlife and the wildlife response activities. The Wildlife Coordinator will also form the contact point for local rehabilitators and be the key person to engage with them directly regarding wildlife impacts and potential for incoming wildlife.

The PIO will handle all media queries relating to impacted wildlife. To provide a coordinated media response, the PIO is required to liaise closely with their counterparts in all Emergency Management Team partner agencies participating in the emergency response. They will work with the Wildlife Coordinator to prepare key messages and media releases.

In addition to media releases and interviews, information can be provided in the form of fact sheets, maps, brochures, photos and signs.

6.3 Statewide communications

Statewide messaging will occur through the State Control Centre. Generic advice for the public on what to do if they see injured wildlife will be circulated with incident warnings through the State level communication channels including the VicEmergency app and social media. The provision of this information will be supported, and fact checked by the State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies.

DELWP will share information with the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee and provide operational updates as needed.

6.4 Engagement with wildlife sector

DELWP will engage with key wildlife groups over the course of the fire season. The timing and regularity of this engagement will be determined based on the situation at the time. These meetings will:

- provide accurate and timely information on the incident and projected or identified wildlife impacts
- inform on wildlife response activities
- provide an opportunity to discuss common and key messages to the public and wildlife community
- collate information and concerns identified by the community.
- specific issues arising within smaller incidents may also be discussed by this group. These meetings will be convened by the State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies or the State Controller (Wildlife) (if appointed).

When appointed, the Wildlife Welfare Sector Liaison will engage strategically with key welfare organisations to ensure that their intelligence or concerns are raised with the State Controller (Wildlife), as well as communicating back key messages and information on response activities to the wildlife sector.

7. Donations

During wildlife emergency events, response agencies, wildlife organisations and individuals receive offers of donations to assist the response. While these offers are appreciated and come from the community's desire to assist and help impacted wildlife, often donations of physical goods cannot be utilised and the requirement to manage and store them diverts human resources away from critical activities of the wildlife response.

Can I help during emergency events?

Yes. The best way to help wildlife during fire events is through financial support.

Despite the best intentions of our community, the donation of materials and goods (including those purchased from veterinary suppliers) often hinder our ability to respond effectively to wildlife emergency events.

Up to date information on what members of the public can do to support wildlife during emergencies can be found at: https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/wildlife-emergencies/wildlife-fire-emergencies

7.1 Material donations

While it is appreciated that community members wish to assist in supporting wildlife response activities during fire, material donations are often problematic for response agencies. Previous events have shown that donations divert significant human resources to sorting, transporting and storing materials. In addition, many donated goods are not useable and have to be disposed of. This includes homemade equipment such as joey pouches.

All equipment and resources required to assess and care for injured wildlife in the field and at triage units will be provided by the IMT through standard incident response arrangements.

7.2 Medical donations

Over the 2019/20 fire season, numerous veterinary supply companies offered a range of donations of both drugs and equipment. It was identified that in some cases this led to a shortage in the availability of some drugs in the marketplace, as well as the frequent donation of unsuitable drugs and equipment for wildlife veterinary response activities.

DELWP and Zoos Victoria will engage with the key veterinary supply companies prior to each season to discuss potential needs and the purchase of targeted medications and supplies. Donations of out of date medical and first aid supplies from the wider community will not be accepted as they are unlikely to be suitable for use on wildlife.

7.3 Financial donations

7.3.1 How to donate

The most effective way to support communities during fires and to undertake recovery activities is through financial donations. There are generally a range of options of who you can donate to from government and bank-led appeals to targeted fundraising campaigns by not-for-profit organisations, wildlife welfare groups or individuals.

Members of the community should research options, including who the recipient of the donation will be and how donations will be spent. Further information on donating can be found on the website of the consumer advocacy group CHOICE at https://www.choice.com.au/shopping/everyday-shopping/ethical-buying-and-giving/buying-guides/donating-to-charity.

Unfortunately, during emergency events, charity scams can be established under the guise of raising money to support emergency support activities, relief or recovery. Consumer Affairs Victoria has developed some information to assist members of the public to donate safely and avoid charity scams. This information can be found at https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/resources-and-tools/advice-in-a-disaster/fundraising-scams.

7.3.2 Seeking donations

Individuals or groups who wish to raise money via community-based or online appeals must ensure they understand the legal obligations that arise from this type of activity and ensure they comply with the *Fundraising Act 1998*. Further information can be found on the Consumer Affairs website at https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-fundraising/fundraisers.

8. End of season reporting

DELWP will provide a report on wildlife welfare response activities at the conclusion of each fire season. The report will include at a minimum:

- counts of animals assessed, triaged, euthanised, rehabilitated and released
- the scale and location of wildlife response activities undertaken
- the frequency and types of welfare concerns or injuries identified
- case studies of specific incidents or interventions.

9. Continuous improvement

DELWP is committed to reviewing activities and identifying ways to continuously improve how it responds to wildlife emergencies. Continuous improvement occurs through reviewing past performance, understanding key issues or circumstances that may have led to an outcome, seeking input and feedback from participants as well as reviewing the veterinary outcomes of the response process. This plan will be revised and updated as required at the conclusion of each fire season. All review activities will be undertaken in line with DELWP and Emergency Management Victoria requirements.

9.1 Incident Debriefs

At the end of each shift, and before standing down personnel, it is important to hold a 'hot debrief' on site to ensure that all operational personnel (including volunteers) have the opportunity to provide immediate feedback on incident management. This must be led by the relevant team leader, with feedback passed back into the IMT to allow modification or improvement of any operational activity.

A formal incident debrief or After Action Review (AAR) should also be conducted involving the wider IMT. This is usually undertaken days or weeks after the event by the Lead Agency. Debriefing should focus on assessing operational objectives, performance and success as well as safety, communications, costs and recommendations.

Both the 'hot debrief' and the formal debrief or AAR will be recorded, so that outcomes and learning can be formally documented. Debriefing is the responsibility of the Incident Controller.

9.2 Veterinary team debriefs

At the conclusion of each season, a formal debrief will be held with accredited veterinary staff who were deployed through the season to discuss and identify issues and improvements in wildlife assessment and treatment. This will involve and outcomes-based review of wildlife veterinary records.

Information gathered from this debrief will be incorporated into veterinary guidance manuals and training.

9.3 Wildlife welfare sector debrief

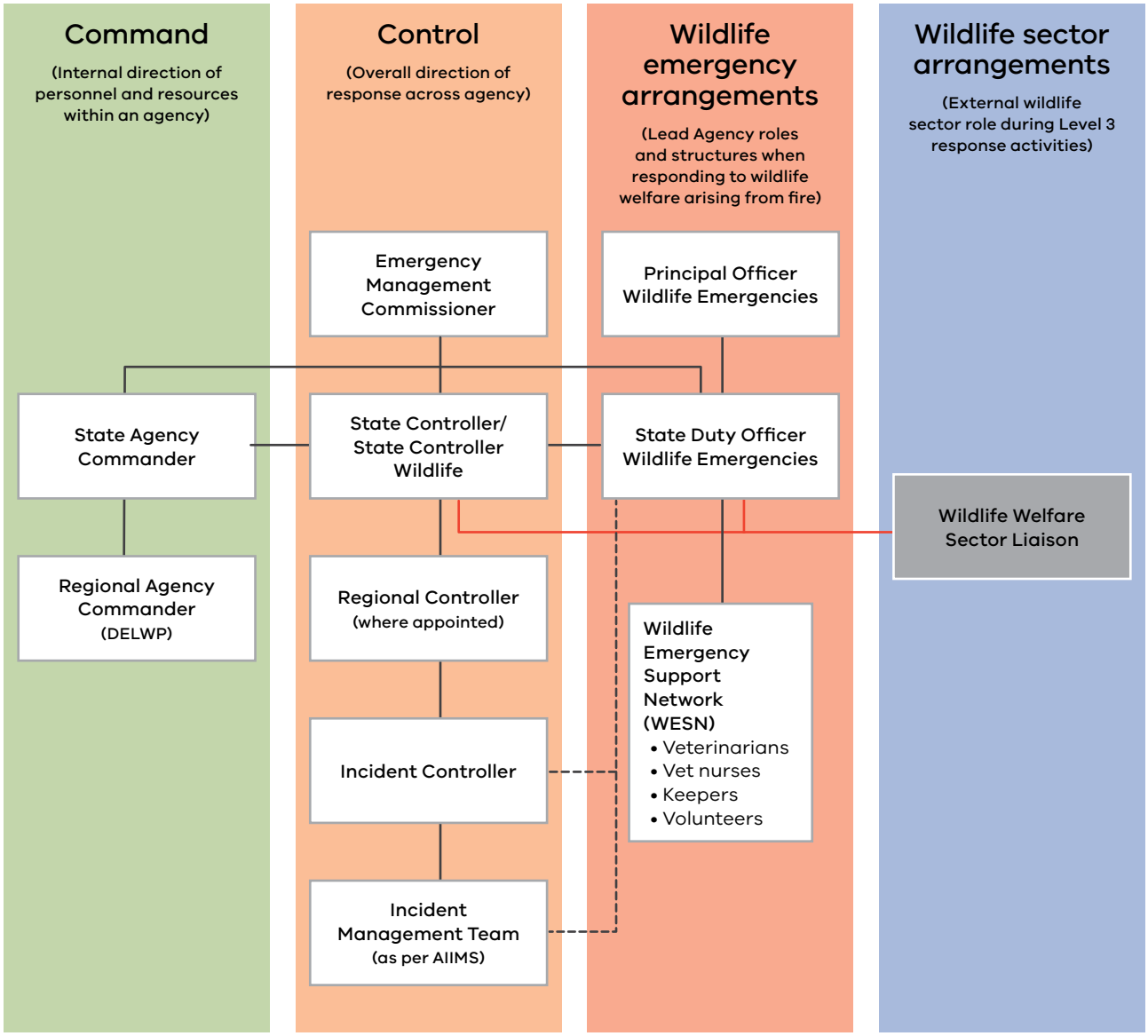
On the conclusion of the fire season, DELWP will convene a meeting of the wildlife welfare groups to seek input and feedback on key issues. This information will then be used to undertake improvements to this plan, training, equipment or other organisational arrangements as appropriate.

9.4 Annual exercise

Prior to each fire season, DELWP will conduct an exercise to test the organisational arrangements in relation to wildlife response. These exercises will be designed based on changes to procedures, feedback from the previous season or to test new arrangements. These may be desk top type exercises, or field based and will include relevant agencies and partners.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Command and Control arrangements for wildlife and fire emergencies



Appendix 2: Role statement of a State Controller – Class 2 Emergency

The following role statement has been extracted from page 77 of the SEMP.

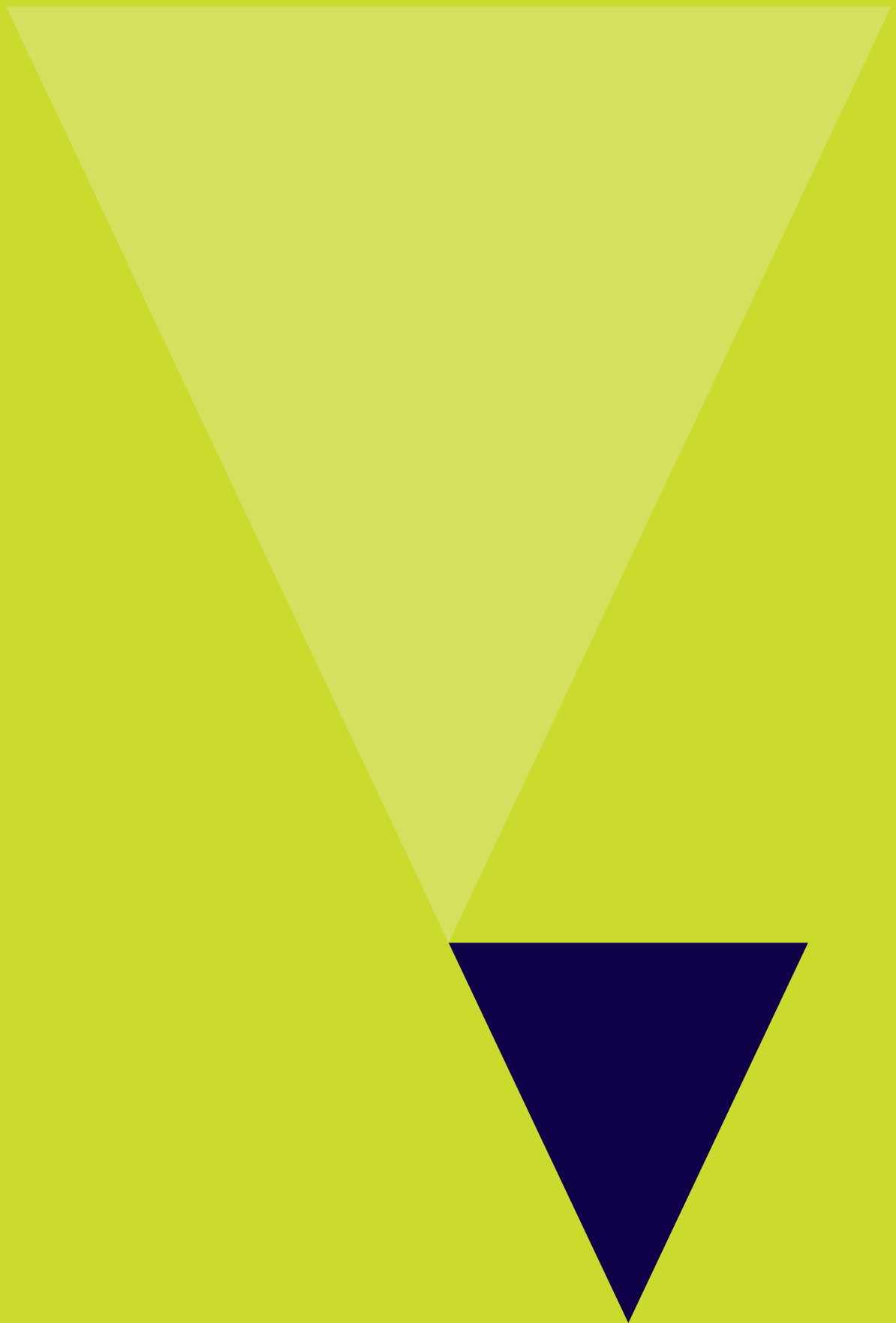
The role of the State Controller – Class 2 emergency is to:

- lead and manage the response to a Class 2 emergency
- establish a management structure for the emergency as appropriate and monitor it to ensure it suits the circumstances
- issue warnings and information to the community in relation to emergency, if regional or incident tier controllers can't do so promptly, consultation with the EMC
- support the EMC to identify current and emerging risks, or threats in regard to the emergency, and implement proactive response strategies
- support the EMC in the development of state strategic plan for managing the emergency
- give directions to regional and/or incident controllers as necessary
- work with the EMC to lead the SCT, or work with the other state tier controllers if appointed participate in the SEMT
- oversee for the emergency the operational functioning of the State Control Centre
- ensure the timely flow of relevant information to the EMC, SCOT, SCT, SEMT and other support teams and stakeholder agencies
- apply the EMC's operational standards and incident management procedures as appropriate.

The State Controller – Class 2 emergency must keep the EMC informed about:

- the effectiveness of the control arrangements for the emergency
- consequence management planning, implementation and outcomes
- the integration of recovery with the response arrangements.

The State Controller – Class 2 emergency must consider and apply the State Emergency Management Priorities.



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