**GUIDE TO BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

**POLICY TEMPLATE**

**ABOUT THIS POLICY AREA**

This policy guides how the organisation plans for disasters, manages or responds to the impacts of disaster and the recovery process.

**Policy checklist**

The following checklist will help you check that an existing policy covers this area adequately.

The policy should:

*  say who will be responsible for developing and maintaining a disaster plan for the organisation
*  say how disaster planning will be documented
*  explain how risks and potential impacts on the organisation and its services will be identified and planned for
*  explain how implementation of actions responding to risks are monitored and reviewed for effectiveness
*  contain clear procedures and actions
*  indicate the timing of any actions
*  show when it was approved
*  show when it was last reviewed.

**COMPLETING YOUR BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS POLICY**

**Using the policy template**

The template provides some example statements. You can adapt these statements and include them in your policy or write your own statements to better suit the operations and services of your organisation.

The policy templates include **red text** prompts to insert information that is specific to your organisation.

**Guidelines for each section of your policy**

***1. Purpose***

In thinking about the purpose of this policy, consider how it might apply to the services you provide. This may vary for organisations who play an active role in disaster response and recovery, and those who are mainly focused on minimising the disruption to their services, and costs to the organisation.

***2. Scope***

To determine the scope of the policy, consider the following questions:

• Does this policy apply to all your organisation’s services, assets, personnel? Different sites or services may be impacted differently.

* Some services, due to their nature and resources, may play an active role in responding to disasters and will need procedures about different working arrangements during times of disaster.
* Some services may wish to clearly state their limitations in responding to disaster situations, to better manage client and community expectations.

***3. Policy statement***

If you are adopting the policy statement in the template, consider whether there are any additional commitments your organisation wants to make.

In identifying the actions your organisation will take to implement this policy, you should include the following:

* Following an agreed process to gather information and advice, to consider possible impacts and plan for operations (and closures) during disasters appropriate to your organisation.
* Maintenance of a Business Continuity and Disaster Preparedness Plan
* Ensuring staff and volunteers are familiar with arrangements and planning for disasters
* Identifying any role your organisation may play in assisting clients to be prepared for disasters
* Regularly reviewing your Plan, particularly following each disaster, and identifying any improvements.

***4. Procedures***

The procedures describe how your organisation achieves the aims and goals you have outlined in your purpose, scope and policy statement.

*4.1 Business Continuity and Disaster Preparedness Plan*

Indicate who will be responsible for maintaining the Plan.

The Plan may be quite a detailed document, depending on the role your organisation plays in disaster response and recovery, the nature of the services you provide, and the location or assets of the service. For example, a service which provides short term counselling may suspend the service during times when telecommunications are down and travel is unsafe, without major impact. Another service may be actively involved in disaster response, such as evacuation centres, and would need specific operating procedures during these times.

The policy simply needs to clarify the expected limits of the organisation’s involvement in a disaster, and commitment to plan, while the details are contained in the current Disaster Plan itself.

List the general categories of information that will be included in the Plan. Consider including the following:

* Identifying the most likely disaster events – this may vary according to your location/s. Generally, councils will have local disaster management plan details on their websites, and will include information about local risks and vulnerabilities.
* Strategies to prepare for or minimise impacts to the **organisation** and it’s assets. This may involve arrangements to relocate equipment, even capital works to lessen risk to a building. A key consideration is the protection and maintenance of communication and data, loss of which will affect both clients and staff
* Arrangements relating to **staffing**. What expectations are there for staff during disasters and what arrangements or limitations are imposed to protect their safety? Are there any back up or relief arrangements that come into play? Will you offer any additional support to staff affected by a disaster, either personally, or in the course of their work?
* Strategies to support or minimise impacts to **clients**. How will you notify them if you have to close or limit services? If you have an ongoing relationship with clients who are likely to need assistance during a disaster, would you provide information or work with other agencies to make sure they receive the assistance they need? Would you consider providing clients with information and helping them to put together a personal plan in preparation for a disaster?
* Practical records such as emergency and essential services contact details, and a disaster event log to record actions taken.
* A “Go-Pack” – essential information, equipment and emergency supplies that can be readily picked up and taken to another location in an emergency and allow some level of continued operation.
* Arrangements with other agencies which may allow you to continue to operate, or resume operations quickly after a disaster. This might include agreement to access a community hall, or share office space, and may be reciprocal.
* If your organisation assumes a specific role during disasters, identify what this is, and the procedures or arrangements that apply.

*4.2 Implementing the Plan*

How will you familiarise staff with your Plan?

Are there specific duties which need to be included in Position Descriptions?

Is there any particular equipment, building modifications or systems that need to be put in place to implement your plan, and who will have responsibility for these?

It may be appropriate to enter some actions into your Continuous Improvement Plan or Risk Management Plan, or at least make reference to them.

*4.4 Reviewing Your Plan*

How often will you review your Plan?

Who will be involved?

What arrangements are there for debriefing staff and reviewing procedures following a disaster?

***5. Other related policies and documents***

List the other policies related to the business continuity and disaster preparedness policy. The policy should be linked to:

* asset management
* continuous improvement
* work health and safety policies
* risk management policy

List other related organisational documents – the main one would be the Business Continuity and Disaster Preparedness Plan, and any related documents, such as an event log template, information provided to clients, consents from clients to share information in the event of a disaster, your “Go Pack” checklist.

***6. Review processes***

Consider how often the policy should be reviewed and the process for doing this:

• **frequency of review:** Most policies benefit from an annual review. The experience of implementing the policy is used to decide which changes are necessary. Consider reviewing your disaster planning policy as part of an annual review of your organisation’s governance- and accountability-related policies or, if your organisation is small, perhaps over a three-year period. Critical incidents may prompt you to review the policy ahead of schedule.

• **responsibility for the review:** In most organisations, the senior staff and/or board or management committee would be responsible for reviewing this policy.

• **process for the review:** Decide which particular staff, volunteers, external people and organisations will provide input to the policy review.

• **decision-making process:** Who will review draft changes to the policy and approve changes? What will be the timeframe for the review process?

• **documentation and communication:** What records of the policy review process are needed? How will changes to the policy be communicated to staff implementing the policy? In a small organisation, this may be as simple as noting the changes at a staff meeting. In a larger organisation, an email memo may be needed.

• **key questions for the review:** Is the policy being implemented? Are procedures being followed? Is the policy clear? What has changed that may prompt a change to the policy? Have particular stakeholders had difficulty with any aspect of the policy? Can their concerns be resolved? How does the policy compare with that of similar organisations?