Policy

Emergency Management

Endorsed by:	CEO	Document Owner:	Organisational Management

Section 1: Preamble

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all Goulburn Options People by outlining the organisation's obligations to plan and prepare for emergencies. It requires Goulburn Options (GO) to have appropriate emergency plans and planning processes in place and to regularly review these plans. It also requires procedures to be in place to minimise damage to buildings, assets and equipment, and to support continuity of services. All People must be aware of their individual responsibilities with regard to emergency management and planning to ensure the effective implementation of this policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Incident Management and Reportable Incidents Policy
- Risk Management Policy

Please refer to **Section 6: Related Documentation** for a full list of procedures relevant to Emergency Management.

This policy is informed by the following legislation and standards:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) and Regulations (2017)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)
- Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)
- The State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators (Emergency and Disaster Management)

Biggest Life Possible Pillar	Biggest Life Possible System	Practice Alignment
Quality of Life	Rights, Dignity, Physical Wellbeing, Emotional Wellbeing	Emergency planning prioritises the safety, dignity and wellbeing of participants and staff. Individuals are supported to understand emergency procedures and exercise personal safety measures, including personalised emergency plans that reflect communication, mobility and support needs. Calm, respectful emergency response protects both physical and emotional wellbeing and supports recovery.
Quality Employment	Work Environment, Workforce Capability, Supervision & Training, Communication	Staff are trained, supported and equipped to respond confidently and safely in emergencies. Clear communication channels, drills and supervision embed preparedness as part of a safe and psychologically supported workplace. Workforce

		contingency and support systems maintain safe working conditions during and after emergencies.
Quality Practice	Safety, Compliance. Performance & Impact, Continuous Improvement	Emergency management practices comply with legislative requirements, emergency management frameworks, and NDIS Practice Standards. Regular testing debriefs and reviews ensure systems remain effective and evolve based on lessons learned. Participant-specific planning strengthens individual safety outcomes and safeguards.
Quality Business	Governance, Risk, Continuity, Assets & Infrastructure	Emergency management is integrated into risk, governance and business continuity systems. The Board and leadership oversee preparedness, resource allocation and compliance. Asset protection, infrastructure resilience and service continuity planning ensure the organisation remains safe and operational during disruptions.
Quality Community	Partnerships, Communication & Engagement, Community Safety	Collaboration with emergency services, health partners and community networks enhances shared safety and coordinated response. Communication with participants, families and stakeholders during emergencies is proactive, accessible and inclusive. Community awareness initiatives and recovery support strengthen community resilience and trust in GO.

Section 2: Scope

This policy applies to all Goulburn Options People at all times. For the purposes of this policy People refers to all members of Goulburn Options' workforce, including students and volunteers, participants, families, carers, contractors and visitors.

Emergencies may include, but are not limited to:

- Floods, storms, bushfires, grassfires and earthquakes
- Building or industrial fires, explosions and accidents
- Extreme heat and heatwaves
- Outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics (e.g. COVID-19, thunderstorm asthma, influenza, emergency animal disease)
- The contamination of food or water supplies
- Disruptions to essential services (e.g. electricity and/or gas, water, or telecommunications networks)
- Cyber incidents (such as data breaches and system failures impacting service delivery, participant and service data)
- Terrorism threats and other acts of violence (e.g. intruder, bomb threat)
- Hazardous materials

An emergency does not need to directly affect Goulburn Options for it to have an impact on our participants, staff or service delivery. For example, smoke from a bushfire may result in poor air quality, leading to potential breathing difficulties. In this instance, GO may need to consider closing, relocating or otherwise altering service.

While each emergency is unique, their impacts can be similar and occur concurrently. The planning undertaken for one type of emergency can, therefore, be applied across several similar scenarios.

Section 3: Policy Statement

Victoria's *State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)* recognises that all Victorians have a role in planning for, responding to and recovering from emergencies. It outlines that whilst emergency responders play a crucial role in providing immediate assistance and ensuring public safety during an incident, service providers also have individual responsibilities. This collaborative approach ensures that responsibilities are appropriately distributed.

Goulburn Options recognises this responsibility and plans accordingly, with an approach guided by the following principles.

3.1 Prevention

Goulburn Options will ensure that hazards and risks will be identified, assessed and controlled with the view of preventing avoidable emergencies from occurring. Goulburn Options will:

- Identify, assess, and control foreseeable hazards and risks across all sites, programs and activities
- Integrate emergency prevention into broader risk management and OHS systems,
- Implement and maintain proactive property and asset management measures, such as site inspections, maintenance schedules, vegetation clearance, and fire-safe practices
- Promote infection prevention and control practices, vaccination programs, and outbreak management planning to reduce risks from epidemics and pandemics
- Support workforce and participant awareness by communicating identified risks and promoting individual actions that contribute to prevention, and shared responsibility

3.2 Preparation

With the understanding that despite best practice prevention strategies, some emergencies are unavoidable, or external to Goulburn Options, and will still occur, GO will ensure that all People and sites are prepared to manage emergencies through robust training and resourcing. Goulburn Options will:

- Maintain comprehensive, emergency management plans for key emergency types and/or locations that are reviewed annually and tested through regular drills and exercises
- Ensure emergency plans reflect each service type, location and participant profile, inclusive of their various needs (e.g. communication, mobility, behaviour support)
- Establish participant-specific emergency plans that include medical information, supports required during an emergency and agreed communication protocols
- Provide training, information and instruction to the GO Workforce (including Fire Wardens, First Aid Officers, volunteers and students) in emergency and disaster procedures, safe evacuation, use of emergency equipment, and participant-specific plans

- Maintain workforce contingency planning, including up-to-date contact lists, relief staffing strategies, and procedures for service continuity during workforce shortages (e.g. pandemic)
- Ensure resources such as PPE, first aid equipment, emergency kits, transport options and communication tools are available and maintained
- Establish relocation and closure triggers, ensuring these are communicated in advance

3.3 Response

Goulburn Options will ensure that emergency management and preparedness plans will be effectively implemented to manage emergencies and minimise harm. In the event of an emergency, GO will:

- Activate the relevant emergency management plan immediately when risks are identified and follow pre-established triggers and procedures
- Contact emergency services where appropriate without delay
- Prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of all People above all other considerations
- Implement appropriate protective actions such as evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, or service modification/cessation based on the type and severity of the emergency
- Ensure effective communication with participants, families, carers and guardians, including providing timely and accessible information during emergencies
- Work in collaboration with emergency services, local government, and sector partners, while acknowledging that emergency responders may not always be available or able to assist in large-scale emergencies

3.4 Recovery

Continuity planning, strategies and plans will be in place and enacted immediately following an emergency to reduce impacts to Goulburn Options and its People. Following an emergency GO will:

- Immediately assess and address the health and wellbeing needs of all People, including debriefing and referral to psychosocial supports (e.g. EAP)
- Enact Business Continuity Plan to maintain or restore critical supports, ensuring participants continue to receive essential services in line with their needs, preferences and goals
- Meet legal obligations for incident reporting (e.g. WorkSafe, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission)
- Communicate clearly and regularly with all People regarding service restoration, phased returns or altered service arrangements
- Manage the restoration of facilities, assets, equipment and ICT systems, including insurance claims and financial recovery measures
- Document lessons learned and feed them into future planning, training and risk management processes
- Recognise that recovery may extend long after the immediate event, and commit to ongoing monitoring and support for all People as required

3.5 Continuous Improvement

Goulburn Options will systematically review and update emergency management and continuity plans, processes and practices to ensure the continued integrity and effectiveness of each. This includes:

- Reviewing and updating this Emergency Management Policy and the Business Continuity Plan a minimum of every two years, and after any emergency activation
- Reviewing and updating emergency management plans at least annually, and after any relevant emergency activation
- Conduct regular drills, simulations and debriefs, ensuring feedback is captured and acted upon
- Incorporate sector guidance, legislative updates, and findings from internal and external audits, inquiries or lessons learned from other providers or jurisdictions
- Embed a culture of continuous learning and shared responsibility by engaging participants, staff, volunteers, carers and community partners in reviewing and strengthening emergency management practices

Section 5: Roles

Role	Responsibilities and Accountabilities
Board	• Provide governance oversight of emergency management • Appropriately resource emergency management practices and protocols • Monitor risks through regular reporting • Ensure management accountability for effective implementation of this policy
Organisational Management	• Develop, maintain and annually review all emergency management policies, procedures and related documentation (e.g. plans, checklists) • Allocate resources to ensure emergency preparedness (e.g. training, PPE, transport, communication systems) • Ensure compliance with legislation and standards • Activate organisational response and recovery plans • Ensure external reporting of notifiable incidents and emergencies • Monitor local conditions
Team Leaders	• Ensure workforce completes training and drills, and are aware of emergency roles • Implement site-specific, and participant-specific plans • Provide direction to staff during emergencies and support recovery debriefing and feedback processes • Maintain accurate records of emergency activities
Workforce *(Admin, DSW, Students, Volunteers)*	• Participate in emergency training, induction and drills • Follow established procedure and respond appropriately in emergencies • Support participants in line with individual emergency plans and communication needs • Report incidents, hazards and risks accurately and promptly • Contribute feedback for reviews and continuous improvement

Participants	• Engage in the development and review of personal emergency plans • Communicate support needs where possible with assistance from families/carers • Follow staff directions during emergencies to maintain safety • Provide feedback after emergencies to support continuous improvement

Section 6: Related Documentation

Document Name	Document Type
Code of Conduct	Policy
Health and Safety	Policy
Incident Management and Reportable Incidents	Policy
Risk Management	Policy
Hazard Register	Register
Risk Register	Register
Risk Assessments	Form
Child Safety and Wellbeing	Policy
Key Elements of Participant Safety and Wellbeing	Policy
Health Management	Policy
Participant Risk Assessment	Form
Hazard Management	Procedure
Risk Management	Procedure
Asset Management	Procedure
Maintenance	Procedure
Occupational Health and Safety Inspections	Procedure
Staff Training Records	Procedure
Hazard Management	Procedure
Induction and Orientation	Procedure
Infection Prevention and Control	Procedure
PPE Stocktake	Procedure
Sun and Heat Exposure	Procedure
Working in Isolation	Procedure
Fire Safety and Emergency Plan	Procedure
Immediate Response Emergency Event Procedure	Procedure
Incident Management	Procedure
Outbreak Management Plan	Procedure
Natural Disaster Emergency Plan	Procedure
First Aid	Procedure
Workplace Injury and Illness	Procedure
Medical Emergency	Policy
Case Review and Root Cause Analysis	Procedure
Continuous Improvement	Procedure
Internal Audit	Procedure
Data Breach	Procedure

Section 7: Definitions

Term	Definition
Emergency	An incident or event that threatens the health, safety or wellbeing of participants, staff, volunteers, or visitors; disrupts service delivery; or damages property, assets or essential services. Examples include natural disasters, fires, pandemics, service outages, cyber incidents, and threats of violence.
Business Continuity	The ability of Goulburn Options to continue delivery of critical supports and services to participants at acceptable levels during and after an emergency, through contingency planning and recovery arrangements.

Date of Last Review	October 2025	Date of Next Review:	October 2027