

Chapter Four – Needs Assessment

In this chapter we undertake a broad needs assessment from the perspective of community led recovery. In other words, OUR assessment of OUR needs ‘right now’ and going forward.

In so doing, we look at the factors which shape our recovery including:

- Community ideas and suggestions for bushfire recovery,
- External factors and trends which will shape our recovery initiatives, and
- The capacity of our community to absorb, implement and sustain recovery initiatives.

This information provides the context for the strategies underpinning our bushfire recovery proposals and priorities.

What is a Needs Assessment?

A needs assessment is a systematic process for determining or addressing needs or ‘gaps’ between current and desired conditions.¹ A key component in the management of a disaster recovery program within any community is an assessment of needs following the disaster.

Effective recovery programs are led by sound knowledge and evidence of community needs as well as capacities and strengths. This includes analysis of disaster impacts, community needs and the collective capacity of community to address these needs.²

This needs assessment provides the context and rationale for our recovery projects detailed in Chapters Five to Nine. The projects are grounded in our recovery strategies and offer recovery solutions based on local knowledge and preferences.

The needs assessment process could conclude we merely need to replace those things which were lost. This would be a simplistic approach. The opportunity exists to make Mallacoota and District (MAD) safer and more resilient; to not only recreate those things we loved but to reinforce our sense of place through the creation of stronger connections, better infrastructure and new things to love.

Community Input

In July 2020 we kickstarted a community brain storming process by holding a MADRA committee brainstorm. The aim was to get ideas for bushfire recovery and to identify any gaps in recovery services and infrastructure.

COVID19 currently prevents us from having a town meeting so the results of the committee brainstorm were posted in the windows of the Bushfire Recovery Hub in Maurice Ave. Another set of documents was forwarded to the Genoa pub. Paper copies of the

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Needs_assessment

² <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/toolkit/Community-Recovery-Toolkit-Recovery-Needs-and-Capacity-Assessment.pdf>

documents were also available. Community members were invited to add to the list via email or letter. MADRA suggestion boxes were also put in place outside the Mallacoota and Genoa post boxes.

We received many letters and emails with ideas for bushfire recovery and community resilience in general. The suggestions can be loosely grouped under the following themes:

- Understanding what was not 'fit for purpose' during the bushfires and ideas for improvement.
- What was not in place during the bushfires which needed to be.
- Suggestions for how we can be better prepared for future bushfires.
- Ideas for community cohesiveness, connections and resilience.
- Ways for enhancing economic and job security.
- Replacing and/or preserving what we loved and improving on what we didn't.
- Innovative ideas for new projects and facilities.

These ideas have been incorporated in this draft plan. The next step in the process is gaining community endorsement of recovery initiatives. This is tricky in the COVID-19 environment and in a community where over a fifth of our members is not connected to the internet. For those connected to the internet, we will be using our website (madrecovery.com), email, surveys and other tools to gauge support. We will also make available hard copies of the chapters of this Recovery Plan.

A key piece of community feedback is there is no broad desire for Mallacoota to expand. People like living in a small country town. The danger, however, is the town might shrink unless we can entice young families to stay or to move here. This is because our population is elderly – nearly half is over the age of 60 and around one seventh over the age of 75. The loss of a significant proportion of our population either through a desire to move closer to family or to aged care and/or medical facilities is a possibility. Not only would we lose precious friends and valuable knowledge this would have adverse flow on effects for businesses, employment opportunities and support services.

Genoa residents have expressed a desire for infrastructure which will enhance township appearance, improve and increase amenities and attract more economic activity. Based on the experience of being isolated during the bushfires, the need for emergency facilities and equipment was highlighted.

External Factors

In this section we look at those external factors which will shape our recovery strategies.

Forewarned is forearmed. To be on the recovery 'front foot' we need to understand the broad political, economic, environmental, social and technological trends which will impact our recovery. The following analysis is not intended to be exhaustive but sufficient to give insight. Our aim is to build robust and enduring solutions into our recovery planning and projects.

Political Outlook

The political climate in Australia has been so volatile in recent years that making a prediction as to its future direction is fraught with danger. The deciding factor will likely be how Australia recovers post bushfires/COVID-19 in terms of social and economic confidence.

To this end, our State and Federal Governments have some time to engineer recovery solutions. The next State election is not due until 26th November 2022 and the next Federal election will take place in or before 2022. We live in 'safe' Nationals seats at both the State and Federal level. Both our Federal and State electorates are broad and not necessarily indicative of local political preferences.

Our local council election has just taken place. Nine councillors have been elected of which three are previous Mayors. Relevant policy statements will be included in this plan as they are announced.

Future Disaster Management and Recovery Arrangements

A number of high-level investigations into the 2019-20 bushfires have taken place or are underway.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report was tabled in Parliament on 30th October 2020. This will have implications for disaster preparedness and recovery. A key recommendation is for a scalable national approach to resilience and recovery to improve both preparedness and responsiveness.

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) is a Victorian Agency. On 14th January 2020 the State government announced an independent inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian fire season would be conducted by IGEM.

Phase one of the IGEM inquiry focused on community and sector preparedness for and response to the 2019-20 fire season.

Phase two of the inquiry will directly impact our recovery efforts as it focuses on progress and effectiveness of Victoria's immediate relief and recovery arrangements concerning the 2019-20 fire season. Matters for consideration include:

- Effectiveness of immediate relief and recovery work and arrangements including at the regional and incident levels.
- Creation of Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) and the National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) and how these entities will work together for the benefit of affected Victorian communities, including consideration of long terms efforts directed at social, economic (including small business, tourism and agricultural sectors) and environmental recovery.
- Effectiveness of how roles and responsibilities for recovery have been divided between Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and BRV.

The outcomes of these investigations will shape our disaster recovery and preparedness and will be incorporated into the plan when approved by the respective Governments.

Economic Outlook

For the first time in 29 years, Australia is in a recession. A recession is defined as 'a period of temporary economic decline during which trade and industrial activity are reduced, generally identified by a fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in two successive quarters.'³

The 'trickle down' effect of a recession is a reduction in spending by ordinary people. We are less likely to spend money on luxury and big-ticket items. One way to slow down the effects of a recession in small communities is to support local businesses and individuals. Australians spending money in the community is seen as slowing down the decline.⁴

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the Australian economy. As social distancing measures and lockdowns continue, damage to consumer and business balance sheets and weak expectations will likely mean consumption and investment will pick up slowly even after restrictions are lifted.

Opinion is divided on whether or not stimulus packages will be ongoing. Indications are current cash stimulus packages – such as Jobseeker - will be withdrawn across three phases from September 2020-March 2021. There may, however, be stimulus packages of a different nature relating to nation building, infrastructure and other projects designed to bring people back into the workforce.

The Reserve Bank of Australia⁵ predicts:

- Low household and business confidences as restrictions continue.
- Potentially adverse changes to the labour market, workers may need to take jobs that are poor matches for their skills.
- Potential structural changes to the economy to adopt to post outbreak realities.
- Lower investment and poor skill matching could see the economy's productive potential damaged.
- A slower recovery in economic activity would be consistent with inflation remaining low for longer
- Lower wages growth through reduction of hours worked and number of employees and/or wages freezes and/or cuts to hourly wages.
- An increase in the number of long-term unemployed or structural unemployment in the economy if people are not matched to jobs during the recovery phase.

In August 2020, the RBA forecast for the period ending December 2020 predicts:

- GDP contraction of around 6 per cent.
- Decline in household consumption of approximately 7 per cent.
- A 17 per cent reduction in business investment.

³https://www.google.com.au/search?source=hp&ei=0UdHX9ndCl_grQH5IraQDw&q=what+is+a+recession&oq=what+is+a+recession&gs_lcp=CgZwc3ktYWIQDFAAWABgigpoAHAAeACAAQCIQCSAQCYAQcQAQdnd3Mtd2I6&scient=psy-ab&ved=0ahUKEwiZity81rrrAhUPcCsKHXmLDfIQ4dUDCA0

⁴ <https://www.9news.com.au/national/australia-recession-explained-in-simple-terms-how-it-affects-ordinary-people/adccfd33-440f-48d3-89ea-238e70242265>

⁵ <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/smp/2020/may/economic-outlook.html>

- An unemployment rate of 10 per cent.

Analysis by McKinsey⁶ offers three categories and six forces shaping economic shock: COVID-19 restrictions (number of domestic customers, industry constraints), business cycle effects (spending per person, value of exports, business health) and structural changes (shifts). The first two are temporary, the latter permanent.

The McKinsey report suggests the industries most affected in the short term (COVID-19) space are tourism, arts and recreation services, accommodation and food services, and education and training. The report notes, however, there are variations within each of these sectors.

For example, Australia is a net importer of tourism. Australians spend more overseas on international tourism (around \$45bn) than international tourists bring to Australia (\$40bn). While our national borders remain closed, there is a significant hit to the tourism sector. However, if Australians were to direct their international spending to domestic holidays, the tourist industry is buffered from the loss of international spending. This is not a simple matter of repurposing this expenditure. Australians spend less money and less time on domestic holidays and choose different destinations to foreign tourists. This may be a boon for some tourist towns, such as ours, but of little help to others (such as Sydney and Melbourne).⁷

The combination of top down stimulus, revised policy settings and bottom up local initiatives (which take into consideration structural changes to the economy) is potentially powerful in the recovery space.

Closer to home, Deloitte Australia Risk Advisory has provided a pro bono analysis of the results of the Rapid Impact Assessment Survey (RAIS) into the impact of the bushfires on businesses. The RAIS was conducted during April/May 2020.

13 businesses in MAD responded with one of the 12 only partially completing the survey. Due to the small number of respondents, the survey results specific to MAD may not represent the views of the MAD business community as a whole. Anecdotal evidence suggests businesses did not complete the surveys as the timing was not good and there was insufficient context around survey context and purpose.

Survey data has been aggregated at Local Government Area (LGA)⁸.

Business impacts include:

- COVID-19 is having the largest negative impact on businesses, via reduced tourism and business closures.

⁶ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/the-next-normal-for-australian-industries-and-workforces?cid=eml-web#>

⁷ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/the-next-normal-for-australian-industries-and-workforces?cid=eml-web>

⁸ 2020 Deloitte Risk Advisory Pty Ltd

- While many businesses were running at reduced capacity or closed during the peak of the bushfire crisis, the impact of COVID-19 has been more significant with 83% of respondents closed or operating at reduced capacity.
- Respondents note the double-impact of financial losses due to bushfire and COVID-19 crises. On average businesses reported losses totalling 11.3% of annual income.
- Retail trade businesses reported the highest overall financial loss related to both the bushfires and COVID-19 crises. The pattern of loss varies depending on the sector.
- Reported losses for larger centres are lower than for more regional areas likely due to fewer and more variable responses influencing the average values.
- Respondents noted staff reductions across all categories of employment with casual staff being the most impacted. On average businesses report 25-30% reduction in staff.

Future outlook predictions include:

- The majority of respondents projected returning to normal operations within 12 months though there remains ongoing uncertainty. Loss of tourism, ongoing business closure and reduced revenue were the most commonly cited ongoing impacts.⁹
- Respondents noted they were more confident of still being in operation over the longer term, but many are less certain in the shorter term of 1-3 months. Half the respondents have either deferred or cancelled investments in their business.

The following observations were made in relation to recovery support:

- Rent/rate relief was rated at the most helpful form of assistance followed by help and advice on the support options available and making applications.
- Many respondents are still uncertain about support options. Bushfire recovery and Federal government support via Job Keeper were among the most commonly accessed services among the respondents.

Environmental Outlook

Our environment is not static. During our lifetime, there has been significant changes to our geography, flora, fauna and climate; some due to evolution and others because of human action.

If we are to devise effective strategies for bushfire recovery, prevention and mediation; we need to understand the impact of our changing climate. The following analysis is taken from the Australian Government's websites pertaining to climate change.¹⁰

The Australian Government has grouped geographical regions into super cluster, clusters and sub clusters for the purpose of climate projections. MAD falls within the Southern Slopes (Victoria East) sub-cluster.

⁹ Ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19 and fears about it reaching our district are causing further uncertainty and fear from both social and economic perspectives.

¹⁰https://www.google.com.au/search?q=southern+slopes+Victoria+East+sub+cluster+diagram&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj-xMDN_rzrAhWFb30KHcCzDyIQ_AUoAXoECAwQAw&biw=1074&bih=1226#imgrc=-SjZb4KjJCyHyM



Figure 14 Southern Slopes Sub-cluster

The Southern Slopes sub-cluster is within the 'midlatitudes' of the global climate system, falling between the subtropical ridge of high pressure (at about 30 °S) and the so called 'Roaring Forties' (at 40-50 °S). The region receives rainfall from a variety of weather systems, including cold fronts and troughs coming from the west as well as cut off lows and other systems.

Key messages are:

- Average temperatures will continue to increase in all seasons (*very high confidence*)
- More hot days and warm spells are projected with *very high confidence*. Fewer frosts are projected with *high confidence*.
- Generally, less rainfall in the cool season is projected with *high confidence*. Changes to summer and autumn rainfall are possible but less clear. For the near future, natural variability is projected to dominate any projected changes.
- Increased intensity of extreme rainfall events is projected, with *high confidence*.
- Mean sea level will continue to rise, and height of extreme sea-level events will also increase.
- **A harsher fire-weather climate in the future (*high confidence*)**
- On annual and decadal basis, natural variability in the climate system can act to either mask or enhance any long term human induced trend, particularly in the next 20 years and for rainfall.

Social Outlook

The post bushfire social outlook is intrinsically linked to COVID-19 and how the world will look when the pandemic passes. There will likely be a 'new normal' characterised by changes in how we work, play and connect.

Working from home (WFH) is becoming an accepted way of life. Evidence suggests that in some industries WFH is just as productive as traditional workplaces. As part of this shift, we

are seeing the rise of the village as people spend more time in their home settings and less time in major city central business districts.

A likely flow on effect from WFH is decentralisation as people may no longer need to live near a major city in order to work.¹¹ There may changes to the housing market as regional areas start to look more attractive and affordable. The importance of infrastructure such as the NBN will be highlighted but there will also be calls for other types of infrastructure to meet a new demography.

The nature of work will likely change. During the COVID-19 pandemic as people have lost jobs there has been a massive increase in start-up businesses. In July 2020, 50,000 start-ups were registered, up more than 30% at the same time in 2019.¹² The start-ups include cottage industries, online businesses, consulting and education.

If the right support is given, social enterprises could also provide employment pathways for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged people who have fallen out of the workforce.¹³ Social enterprises are:

'businesses that trade to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide people access to employment and training, or help the environment. Using the power of the marketplace to solve the most pressing societal problems, social enterprises are commercially viable businesses existing to benefit the public and the community, rather than shareholders and owners.'¹⁴

Consumer behaviours will change as a result of economic uncertainty, the long-term impacts of unemployment¹⁵ and, potentially, increased mindfulness around sustainable consumption. Discretionary expenditure on items such as travel, tourism, hospitality and entertainment will fall or be replaced by different choices.

There will be ongoing mental health issues based on fear of the world no longer being a safe place and post-traumatic stress arising from bush fire trauma compounded by COVID-19 imposed restrictions. On a positive note, shared experiences of stress can often bring communities together.¹⁶

New societal inequalities are emerging with socially disadvantaged groups hit disproportionately harder as COVID-19 forces choices around staying home or going to work to put food on the table.

¹¹Jim Bright 30th August 2020

¹² <https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/watch/surge-in-new-business-registrations-across-australia/vp-BB18tvLc>

¹³ <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2020/04/social-enterprise-has-a-unique-role-in-the-covid-19-challenge/>

¹⁴ <https://www.socialtraders.com.au/about-social-enterprise/what-is-a-social-enterprise/social-enterprise-definition/>

¹⁵ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/what-risks-does-covid-19-pose-to-society-in-the-long-term/>

¹⁶ <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/news/after-covid-19-what-will-normal-life-be-like/>

The wealth gap between young and old will widen as our youth face significant educational and employment challenges. World-wide, more than 1.6 billion young people are not attending school. Educational inequalities will lead to disadvantage in the labour markets and further exacerbate inequalities.¹⁷ Add to the mix social restrictions, such as being unable to celebrate rites of passage, and the potential for long term mental health issues and social unrest is high.

Technological Outlook

The bushfires and COVID-19 have highlighted the importance of connectivity; in particular, ubiquitous high-bandwidth technology such as 5G. Connectivity trends which can expect to continue in some form include:¹⁸

- A massive global shift to remote working including video conferencing, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) training.
- Replacement of classroom learning with remote schooling including virtual classrooms, AR and VR education content.
- Substitution of in-person gatherings for online socialisation including group video chats, online gaming and virtual exercise classes.
- Shifts in commerce and retail in response to sudden changes in consumer behaviour including online stores and smart warehouses.
- Public health crisis response including artificial intelligence for public health, telehealth, connected hospitals and connected transport/drones.

The roll out of 5G is taking place across Australia albeit slowly.

The Gippsland Regional Partnership is one of nine partnerships across Victoria, established by the Victorian Government, recognising local communities are in the best position to understand the challenges faced by their region.¹⁹ Partner organisations include the Committee for Gippsland, Regional Development Australia Gippsland and the Gippsland Local Government Network.²⁰ These groups have collaborated to produce the Regional Digital Plan for Gippsland. The plan acknowledges the importance of digital connectivity to people's lives and that many communities are disadvantaged which it comes to accessing digital infrastructure and services.

The plan (last updated in August 2019) identifies a series of priorities for addressing Gippsland's digital connectivity gaps. Priorities centre on:

- addressing mobile blackspots,
- better services for remote and vulnerable communities,
- influencing stronger NBN and successor technologies for business grade services,
- facilitating digital literacy training, and

¹⁷ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/what-risks-does-covid-19-pose-to-society-in-the-long-term/>

¹⁸ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Accelerator_Program_5G_Outlook_Report_2020.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/gippsland#:~:text=The%20Gippsland%20Regional%20Partnership%20is,opportunities%20faced%20by%20their%20region.>

²⁰ https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1872946/Gippsland-Digital-Plan-Final-25-September.pdf

- enhancing connectivity in tourist hotspots.

Particular shortfalls for East Gippsland are seen as:

- a shortage of skilled technology professionals,
- lack of general digital proficiency,
- lack of access to technology skills training,
- poor mobile phone coverage and reliability, and
- no or inadequate public WiFi in small towns.

The findings and priority actions detailed in Gippsland Digital Plan will form the basis of the Regional Partnership's advocacy to the Commonwealth, Victorian and local governments, as well as industry and community groups in developing the future digital landscape of Gippsland.

There is work already happening in this space. Telstra is participating in the Victorian Government – Digital Connectivity Service Program (ITP) and the Commonwealth Regional Connectivity Program (RCP). We have provided letters of support for Telstra's plans to update our telecommunication network with mobile coverage and for a new mobile tower to provide coverage. This will have the effect of reducing communication black spots.

In other technological developments, new bushfire fighting technology is being devised to better defend people and communities including:

- Virtual reality and haptic (3D touch) technology to train firefighters, reducing their exposure to toxic perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS).
- Improvements to keep firefighters safe from truck burnovers.
- Use of drones to locate property damage and hotspots and to drop small spheres of potassium permanganate 'dragon eggs' which burst into flame on hitting the ground to create firebreaks.
- Using satellite and space cameras to monitor bushfires from orbit and provide firefighters with mapping information.
- Using sound waves to extinguish blazes negating the use of water or chemicals.²¹

Community Capacity

In this section we look inwards to our ability to undertake and absorb bushfire recovery activities and initiatives. Inextricably, our bushfire recovery is linked with COVID-19 conditions which have exacerbated our recovery efforts.

A SWOT analysis is a useful tool to assist decision making, guide strategy development and identify potential risks. SWOT stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. The **SW** components are inward looking, and the **OT** are externally focussed.

²¹ <https://www.createdigital.org.au/5-ways-technology-change-way-fight-bushfires/#:~:text=The%20technology%2C%20called%20DESIS%2C%20or%20DLR%20Earth%20Sensing,Meteorology%E2%80%99s%20rainfall%20data%20in%20its%20level%20of%20detail.>

The following tables provides an elementary SWOT analysis of our community which focuses on our capacity to undertake bushfire and COVID-19 recovery initiatives.²²

MAD SWOT	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>We put aside our differences and pull together in a crisis.</p> <p>Strong social capital and networks with over 50 clubs and organisations</p> <p>A love of place and our wilderness setting.</p> <p>Community voice through MADRA.</p> <p>Wide diversity of skills, education and experiences – over one quarter of us has a Certificate 111 qualification or higher, nearly one fifth has a university degree.</p> <p>We have a good mix of technicians, tradespeople, professionals, labourers, care workers, sales and administrative workers. (We can fix it, build it, write about it, care for it, sell it and manage it!)</p> <p>We are used to being isolated and ‘at the end of the line’.</p> <p>We are a DIY community, over 39% of us volunteer in some way.</p> <p>Infrastructure strong points: airport, emergency back-up diesel generator (under installation), reliable water supply, community radio station.</p>	<p>An aging population – as at 2016 nearly one half was over 60 and one seventh was over 75. Potentially, we could lose a considerable portion of our population if people in this demographic move closer to family and/or hospitals. Not only would we lose precious friends and valuable knowledge, there could be significant flow on effects for our economy.</p> <p>Our reliance on volunteerism could be unsustainable as our population ages.</p> <p>We are a vulnerable population. As at 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly one third (32.3%) lives alone. • Three quarters (75%) survives on either lowest or medium low income. • Just over one fifth (22.3%) has no internet connection • 5.6% live with a disability • 4.5% has no motor vehicle <p>Some people in our population are in danger of slipping between the cracks because of a lack of means of connecting with others.</p> <p>123 homes were lost during the fires. Some people are still struggling with housing issues.</p> <p>A high rate of unemployment (10%) compared with the rest of Victoria (7%).</p> <p>Underemployment is potentially a problem with 50% of workers working part time, including seasonal workers.</p> <p>Only one sealed road in poor condition in and out of Mallacoota.</p> <p>Reliance on fossil fuels for energy.</p> <p>Ocean access issues with boat ramp silting and entrance closures.</p>

²²The SWOT does not account into account issues which were problematic prior to the bushfires as these do not fall within the remit of MADRA; for example, the lack of long-term aged care.

MAD SWOT	
Strengths	Weaknesses
	A poor understanding of cultural and heritage issues leading to the loss of at least one some sacred icon by a contractor.

Figure 15 MAD SWOT Strengths and Weaknesses

MAD SWOT	
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Space for new industries and enterprises in line with our economic, environmental and social values (such as social enterprises, online businesses, cottage industries)</p> <p>A downturn in international travel may translate into more domestic tourism expenditure and opportunities.</p> <p>Potential for stimulus packages in a range of areas to create employment and encourage spending.</p> <p>Ongoing grants and funding opportunities across a range of areas.</p> <p>Working from home becoming a new norm.</p> <p>Technological advances will lead to new approaches to bushfire prevention and recovery.</p> <p>Technological advances in areas such as education and health.</p> <p>New opportunities for connections, learning and training.</p> <p>Existing lobby groups and partnerships, such as the Gippsland Regional Partnership.</p> <p>Community led recovery in the spotlight and a vested interest in it succeeding.</p> <p>Rebuilding damaged or destroyed infrastructure to future and fire proof</p>	<p>Structural changes to the economy could see entrenched unemployment.</p> <p>Ongoing changes to climate conditions including a harsher fire-weather climate, rises to mean sea levels and less rainfall.</p> <p>Social inequalities could lead to mental health issues and social unrest among the young people and socially disadvantage people.</p> <p>The tyranny of distance including end of line connectivity and power issues.</p>

Figure 16 MAD SWOT Opportunities and Threats

Our Bushfire Recovery Strategies

Our analysis throws up a series of 'signposts', the areas in which we should be looking to develop our recovery strategies.

What is meant by 'strategy'? A strategy is a framework for effective decision making. Our strategic framework is focused on achieving our vision of an inclusive, vibrant, strong and safe community. Our recovery strategies guide and focus our efforts on what is most important in our recovery process.

Based on community input, the analysis of the external environment and our community capacity, this section looks at the broad strategies which underpin our bushfire recovery priorities. While these strategies have primary focus on bushfire recovery, they are now also intrinsically linked to COVID-19.

Importantly, what might look like a need or an opportunity on paper might not be one in reality.²³ In such cases, the next step is to identify *actual* gaps and opportunities. This will require looking for new or different evidence to substantiate the need and to inform decision making around projects and priorities.

MADRA's role as a 'community voice' is to work with community members to identify issues and develop solutions for consideration by the organisations responsible for service and infrastructure delivery. As part of this role, we have asked all three levels of government to work together to identify funding pathways for the projects outlined in this plan and/or to suggest other ways for realising our recovery strategies and vision.

The following table contains initial strategies for each of the bushfire recovery pillars.

Initial Strategies in Support of MAD Recovery Projects
Aboriginal Healing and Culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with traditional owners and responsible agencies to identify and protect aboriginal cultural heritage.
People and Wellbeing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek resolution of current housing issues including loss of rental subsidies and a shortfall in rental accommodation for owners and tenants of homes lost during the bushfires.• Identify and advocate for longer term housing solutions to meet the transitional and emergency housing needs and during the rebuilding phase.• Social activities and venues which foster community connections.• Using our formal and informal networks to look out for vulnerable people.• Programs for building resilience across different groups ie youth, elderly people, people living with a disability.• The right support at the right time including information and professional help.• Learning from our bushfire experience, review local emergency and relief plans, identify improvements to emergency infrastructure and ways to provide community members with information on how to be prepared in the event of natural disasters.

²³ For example, not owning a motor vehicle might be a lifestyle choice and not a hardship.

Initial Strategies in Support of MAD Recovery Projects
<p>Buildings and Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace/repair and upgrade our critical infrastructure so that is 'fit for purpose' and is fire and future proofed. • Replace/repair/upgrade and increase recreational facilities for the benefit of community members and visitors. • Explore opportunities for sustainable, independent energy. • Looking at ways to protect our historical and cultural icons. • Revisit our town planning framework.
<p>Business and Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with our Ministers on improving large scale economic infrastructure including roads, communications and energy. • Work with our three levels of government to identify grant and funding opportunities through such programs as the Local Economic Recovery (LER) program. • Undertake strategic research projects. <p>Working alongside MDBTA and other interest groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noting the financial impact of the bushfires and COVID-19 on our local economy during peak visitor season, look at ways to attract year-round business. • Without displacing existing businesses, identify new business opportunities which are compatible across our social, environmental and economic values. • Identify the resources needed to attract businesses which are needed in our community, such as more industrial land and better connectivity. • In anticipation of structural changes to our economy, examine ways for creating opportunities in a new economy such as social enterprises and online businesses. • Investigate pathways for obtaining training and education to enhance employment opportunities in the post bushfire/COVID-19 environment. • Look at government stimulus programs and identify projects which might attract funding. • Consider how the spare capacity in our workforce – due to un- or underemployment or lack of appropriate skills – could also benefit from stimulus projects.
<p>Environment and Biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities to remediate bushfire damage to our flora and fauna. • Examine ways to achieve a balance between bushfire risk reduction and protection of our natural environment. • Examine ways to educate people on our unique natural values and why they must be protected.

Figure 17 Initial Strategies in Support of MAD Recovery Projects