

Joint Operating Guideline

JOG-04

Emergency Relief and Recovery Centre facilities

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Partner Agencies

This Joint Operating Guideline (JOG) has been developed between the **Local Government Functional Support Group (LGFSG)** and the **Emergency Relief Functional Support Group (ERFSG)**.

Purpose

The purpose of this JOG is to provide a common understanding of the role of the ERFSG in providing for immediate community relief through establishment of Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs), and for longer-term recovery needs through Recovery Centres, and how councils can contribute through providing access to facilities for this purpose.

Scope

This JOG relates to the pre-identification of suitable council facilities for Emergency Relief Centres (ERCs) which may also be suitable for Recovery Centres, and where possible, the provision of access by councils of those facilities during emergencies when requested by the ERFSG.

This JOG does not relate to local community or council facilities that may be activated for localised support to communities, such as Community Support Hubs or heat refuges.

Guidelines

Under the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP), SA Housing Trust (SAHT) is the Lead Agency for ERFSG. Participating agencies of ERFSG include the Australian Red Cross, Foodbank SA, Lions Club of Australia, Rotary International, Save the Children and Community Legal Centre (SA) Inc.

The ERFSG is responsible for establishing and managing ERCs and Recovery Centres and identifying and coordinating the provision of practical support and advice services required by individuals, families and communities during and after an emergency.

In SA, an ERC is where emergency relief services are provided to persons affected by an emergency.

An ERC may be set up during an emergency to provide basic, essential and practical needs such as:

- short term shelter (not accommodation at the ERC)
- immediate care and comfort
- information about the emergency
- refreshments and catering
- first aid
- registration and inquiry for missing persons – Red Cross *'Register. Find. Reunite'*

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As an emergency moves from the disaster relief phase into longer-term recovery, the ERFSG is responsible for establishing Recovery Centres which provide longer-term support and services to communities such as access to government and non-government support, resources and services.

An ERC facility may transition to Recovery Centre if appropriate, or due to other community and recovery needs one may be set up at a different location.

Local government can be a valuable contributor to ERCs and for Recovery Centres through access to local facilities and resources, and through local knowledge and connections.

Councils may provide support by:

- identifying facilities that may be suitable for the consideration of ERFSG
- providing access to identified council facilities when requested by ERFSG
- providing support staff for council facilities and/or council liaison when requested by ERFSG

Selection of ERC locations

Councils are not obliged to contribute to the functions of the ERFSG, but those that are willing and able to contribute need to prepare for this activity.

SAHT Regional Managers work collaboratively with stakeholders and local councils to identify potential locations for ERCs. On behalf of the ERFSG, SAHT:

- has established standards for site requirements and a nomination form
- receives nomination forms from stakeholders, including councils, identifying potential ERC locations
- reviews the nomination and determines if the site is suitable
- informs the relevant council (or stakeholder) of the determination of their nomination
- if suitable, adds facility and details to the register of pre-identified ERC locations

The ideal facility will vary between incident, based on the risk profile, community needs, and availability. Valuable facility features may include:

- sufficient capacity that can accommodate staffed stalls and community members seeking support
- hours of operation that allow for activities outside of usual hours
- availability of venue for medium to longer term ERC operations
- accessibility features for people living with disability, car parking allowances, access points
- utilities (such as power, lighting, water, backup generators)
- amenities (such as toilets, heating, cooling, communications, kitchen areas, tea and coffee making facilities and an area for staff breaks)
- equipment (such as fridge, chairs, tables)
- layout of venue (such as space for reception, interview areas, data entry area, private areas)
- suitability for companion animals such as outside areas suitable for pets.

Councils nominating a facility are encouraged to consider and outline council's conditions, such as:

- terms of agreement (damage, usage, liability)
- cost sharing expectations (such as any in-kind contributions, reduced fees, full fee, staff time, venue hire, duration of fee reduction vs. full charge)
- arrangements for venue access, such as point of contact and expected timeframes for making the facility available (including out of hours contact, expected response timeframes)

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- additional resources that may be considered reasonable by the relevant council (staff to manage facility, staff as a liaison, equipment, food, tea, coffee, milk)
- explicit exclusions (such as staffing of the ERC, cleaning, security, portable toilets, restocking)

Often an ERC will be transitioned into a Recovery Centre. Councils should consider and outline what is a reasonable timeframe for use of the facilities and include in the nomination form.

ERC endorsement

SAHT Regional Managers will engage with councils to nominate suitable ERC sites and the ERFSG is responsible for recording pre-identified facilities.

If a nominated ERC site is endorsed by ERFSG the facility details are added to the database of approved sites which is maintained by ERFSG and includes locations, classification, council support level, facility features, arrangements and contact details.

The ERFSG reviews approved facilities every 12 months and contacts nominated persons for each venue to ensure the information is up to date.

Councils that have been advised of a successful facility nomination are encouraged to:

- list activation arrangements in their council emergency management plan
- inform ERFSG of any changes to the venue or conditions of use
- request access to the list of approved sites for [ERFSG ERC Pre Identified Sites current.xlsx](#)

Council Support Level (CSL)

The Council Support Level (CSL) is the level of support the council can provide for ERC facilities that are owned/operated by council. The level is indicative only and may be subject to change based on the capacity of the council at the time (based on i-Responda framework principles).

CSL	Description
A	Council can provide keys and access for the facility but cannot provide additional support (e.g. cleaning, restocking or facility set up)
B	Council can provide keys and access for the facility, assist with initial opening of the ERC and some additional support such as cleaning and amenity restocking.
C	Council can provide full facility support including access, cleaning, maintenance, ICT support of facility services.

Council is not expected to provide relief services. Council support relates only to the venue/facility.

ERC services provided by ERFSG

Services provided at the ERC are at the discretion of ERFSG and are tailored based on the incident and community needs. ERFSG has established a level-based scale of services that might be provided at an ERC and the agencies that will likely be involved.

ERFSG will consider other community facilities that might have been set up, such as Community Support Hubs, and what they might have been offering to ensure the community isn't confused about official service providers and information.

The table below describes the level of services offered at an ERC and agencies that may be involved.

	ERC - Level 1	ERC - Level 2	ERC - Level 3
Description	A safe place where affected people are provided with: • care • comfort • information • light refreshments	In addition to level 1 services: • provision of grants (e.g. emergency hardship and accommodation grants)	In addition to level 2 services: • longer term (i.e. several weeks) • one-stop-shop • additional services beyond Housing SA
Agencies involved	• SA Housing Trust • Australian Red Cross • Disaster & Recovery Ministries	In addition to level 1 agencies: • Rotary & Lions	In addition to level 2 agencies: • Mental Health agencies • Centrelink • Other govt. agencies

Services may include provision of vouchers for access to short-term emergency accommodation for individuals and families whose principal place of residence has been evacuated or has become inaccessible due to the event. Wherever possible, affected community members will be encouraged to make their own accommodation arrangements.

Councils can support the Control Agency and ERFSG by encouraging community preparedness to lower the demand for emergency accommodation needs.

Activation of ERCs

The Control Agency is responsible for managing an emergency and requesting activation of an ERC to support communities.

SAHT has offices across the Adelaide metropolitan area and Regional Centres. Each office maintains an ERC kit and list of pre-identified ERCs so it can respond promptly when an emergency occurs.

The ERFSG in collaboration with the Control Agency will identify location(s) which are safe to use and travel to, based on the emerging situation (weather forecasts and current event information).

An ERC needs to be formally approved by the Control Agency and the State Manager ERFSG, before it is opened and sites will only be activated if needed and if safe and suitable for the emergency.

Councils don't have the authority to activate an ERC.

Community concerns about emergency relief needs and activities should be directed to the Control Agency's hotline.

Councils wishing to amplify concerns should first raise them with the Control Agency or Coordinating Agency (SA Police). Ongoing concerns can be escalated to the LGFSG State Duty Officer by phone (8120 1720) outlining:

- actions taken to raise concerns with the Control Agency and Coordinating Agency
- outcomes and any decision-making factors of the Control or Coordinating Agency
- local information regarding community impacts and consequences

The LGFSG State Duty Officer can then raise the concerns with the relevant authority.

Request for use of a council facility during an emergency

Council support relates to providing access to an endorsed ERC council facility. Councils aren't expected to provide relief services.

If a council facility is identified by the Control Agency and ERFSG as suitable for the incident, an ERFSG representative will contact the nominated council person and:

- request access to the facility
- outline expectations (i.e. timeframes for opening, use, contact details for ERFSG)

Due to the unpredictable and often dangerous nature of emergencies, often ERCs need to be activated quickly. Where councils are unable to facilitate activation within the time requested, this must be communicated to ERFSG.

Based on the details provided by the ERFSG representative, council should:

- make decisions in accordance with the i-Responda Framework and relevant council policies
- reiterate any terms or conditions established throughout the ERC nomination process
- advise if the requested expectations of the ERFSG can be met and outline any delays in process

Public Information

The Control Agency, Coordinating Agency, and ERFSG work collaboratively to develop public information and communication strategies about ERC activations, including the location, hours of operation and services provided.

Local councils are encouraged to amplify Control Agency messages through their networks, and they may be able to provide the Control Agency with information about community networks that could be leveraged for dissemination of public information.

Transition of ERC into Recovery Centre

An ERC may be transitioned into a Recovery Centre that is run and managed by ERFSG for the Department of Premier and Cabinet State Recovery function to provide longer term community support.

The decision to transition to a Recovery Centre is a process between the Control Agency, Coordinating Agency, State Recovery and other key stakeholders including councils within impacted areas.

Cost recovery

During a disaster, the Control Agency request support from councils. Some councils have an i-Responda Plan which outlines the type of support council can provide in emergencies, including facilities for relief and recovery, how they will be managed, and council's approach to finances during emergencies.

If a council intends to seek recovery of any direct costs associated with support, this must be discussed with and agreed to by the Control Agency's Incident Controller at the time of the request.

Expenses incurred during the response or relief phases can be recovered from the Control Agency, and full reimbursement of eligible expenditure should be available.

Working with councils

Work Health Safety and Risk Management

Work Health Safety (WHS) legislation requires everyone to be responsible for their own safety in the work environment. During emergencies, all agencies work cooperatively to ensure that safety is the priority during emergencies and will:

- promote the safe, efficient, effective and cooperative approach to emergencies
- apply and implement all normal safe operating procedures
- share information upon which all parties can make informed decisions regarding their risk assessments, plans and actions
- actively promote these guidelines as a component of the i-Responda framework, relevant WHS policies and the risk management approach to emergency management.

Councils have established risk management policies, procedures and systems which are in place to provide for the safety of all workers. This includes hazard assessment processes undertaken in relation to support activities during an emergency.

i-Responda

Councils participate in emergency support activities based on the principles in the i-Responda Framework. Each council has different capabilities and capacity, and they make assessments on a case-by-case basis about if and how they will support a Control Agency during emergencies.

The key principles of the i-Responda are:

- ***Ordinary operations in extraordinary situations***

Council employees are not emergency service workers. In emergencies, council employees undertake "ordinary operations in extraordinary situations". This means they perform tasks that are part of their regular duties at council, and that they have the necessary training and experience for. This enables employees to follow established council policies, ensuring safe participation and management of risks for the council and its staff.

- ***It's okay to say no***

Councils and employees have the right to decline requests from the control or coordinating agency to provide support (it's okay to say no). The i-Responda decision-making process ensures informed consent and prioritises employee rights and well-being.

A council CEO or their delegate may determine that support cannot be provided to a Control Agency for reasons such as:

- the emergency is impacting council's resources, facilities and/or employees
- council is already supporting another situation
- there aren't enough staff to manage the support
- council resources are unsuitable or insufficient
- the working environment is deemed unsafe
- employer responsibilities cannot be met

- ***Council manages support activities***

Councils and council employees who choose to provide emergency support will operate under the authority and direct supervision (command) of the council.

Councils retain responsibility for their employees during emergency support, this includes decision-making authority, command, employee safety and management.

Disclaimer

Due to the dynamic and evolving nature of emergencies the information in this document is subject to change at short notice and may render some of the information incorrect. All care is taken to ensure the most up to date information is made available at time of publishing.

Definitions

- **Community Support Hub** is a place where impacted communities can seek localised respite and assistance. It provides social connection, care and comfort before, during or after an emergency. It differs from Emergency Relief Centres and Recovery Centres in that it doesn't provide access to important government and non-government information, support and services.
- **Control Agency** means the authority appointed by legislation and state plans responsible for taking control and managing the overall emergency response.
- **Emergency Relief** is the provision of short-term essential needs to individuals, families and communities in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.
- **Emergency Relief Centre** - an Emergency Relief Centre site which has been pre-identified and/or activated by the Emergency Relief Functional Support Group (ERFSG) for the provision of short-term relief services.
- **Emergency Relief Functional Support Group (ERFSG)** is the collective formation of SAHT as the lead agency and participating organisations performing functional roles and capability that support the Control and Coordinating agencies for an emergency.
- **Recovery** is the restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and 'build back better', to avoid or reduce future disaster risk.
- **Recovery Centre** is a site activated by the ERFSG on behalf of State Recovery for the provision of community recovery services to support individuals, families and communities. This may continue for a substantial period (e.g. a year or beyond).

Related Legislation and Documents

- SA State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)
- Local Government Functional Support Plan Group (LGFSG)
- Emergency Relief Functional Support Plan (ERFSG)
- Risk management and Protections Guide
- i-Responda Framework

Contacts

This Joint Operating Guidelines developed by the LGFSG, in collaboration with ERFSG.

For questions regarding these guidelines outside of emergencies please contact the LGFSG via email enquiries@fsg.lga.sa.gov.au.

For advice during emergencies, contact LGFSG 24/7 – 8120 1720

The ERFSG may be contacted at any time via a 24-hour 'on-call' phone: 0427 975 297 or Email: DHSemergencyrelief@sa.gov.au.

Review

This JOG will be reviewed annually to determine its effectiveness and include any updates or amendments as required. This JOG will be reviewed following an activation of an ERC, to capture any agreed changes to processes or policy position.

Approval

Approval	Local Government Association	Emergency Relief Functional Support Group (ERFSG)
	Leanne Schmidt Manager, Emergency Support xxx 2025	Shane Pritchard Executive Director, People and Strategy. xxx 2025