

Rural City of Murray Bridge establish a Community of Practice

In early 2018, the economic sustainability of Murray Bridge was challenged through a fire at one of the largest employers Thomas Foods International. The fire was intense and complicated. It burnt for 16 days.

The incident was managed through a joint collaboration of Emergency Services and supporting Agencies. Their seamless approach to working together is commendable and a lesson for us all.

The ongoing sustainability of Community and Region as one of the largest employers in the region and a significant contributor to the State's economy was challenged. While the fire was on private property the implications would be felt wide spread throughout the Council area, Murraylands and State involving employment uncertainty not only those employed at the site but those secondary and tertiary businesses who undertook business with the Company. The ripple effect within Murray Bridge and the wider region is expected to be felt for a substantial period of time. In acknowledging this impact, Council proactively partnered with Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland to ensure appropriate measures were in place to assist the company's displaced workers (approx. 1400 including 457 visa holders and 417 back packers) and assist the secondary and tertiary businesses in reviewing their business plans to ensure their continued viability.

Creative solutions were required. Solutions included working through standard definitions of services to include businesses just outside the recognised parameters, facilitating a job connection services for those long term employees who were stood down, supporting a bus to transport existing workers to another plant, support those requiring to relocate due to visa conditions with managing their tenancy agreements; support for retaining enrolments in schools and case management for fast tracking development approvals. Provision of social and emotional support was also fundamental.

Following the incident, the Rural City of Murray Bridge have taken a leading role in the development of a Community of Practice for the sharing of information, knowledge and skills which has continued at several levels to encourage the development of Business Continuity Plans, building resilience in small businesses, partnerships, individuals; identifying strategies to connect with the 'hard to reach', facilitating the development of information platforms, developing partnerships and connecting people within the community. Many agencies and committees from the township of Murray Bridge and surrounds have been



Red Cross hosted a workshop for the Murray Bridge Community of Practice in May 2018.



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active participants in the Community of Practice, contributing their ideas and sharing information about their roles and the services they can offer in an emergency.

The ongoing connections and partnerships between agencies has seen improved communication, consistency in messaging, building of networks, accessing information and improved case management for those requiring multi agency support.

Ongoing support for the community includes the continued facilitation of partnerships through introductions, sharing topical information relating to services and programs available. Currently the drought has an impact on our region and through established partnerships information can be shared through various connections to ensure the messaging is widespread. This has seen an improvement in agencies, groups, individuals being connected at many levels which underpins our Community of Practice approach.



Red Cross hosted a follow up workshop in February 2019.

Council will continue to promote the establishment of collaborative partnerships working cohesively together at all levels in our Community the best results for our Community through the sharing of topical information and ensuring the messaging is captured by those seeking the information.



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