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Signed by  Chief Executive Officer

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This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline Loddon Shire Council's (Council) approach to Business Continuity Management (BC Management).

BC Management is defined as "a holistic management process that identifies potential threats to an organisation and the impacts to business those threats, if realised might cause..." (ISO22300:2021)

BC Management takes an informed approach to managing the risks associated with disruptive events affecting the delivery of services and critical business functions. This policy defines and applies best practice BC Management methodologies for robust continuity planning to assist with managing Council service delivery and critical business functions during disruptive events.

This policy incorporates best practice standards in accordance with the Business Continuity Institute Good Practice Guidelines 2018 edition and ISO22301:2019 (ISO22301) Business Continuity Management Systems–Requirements.

An important key to the success of business continuity in any organisation is support and commitment at the highest level. For this reason, this document has been adopted by Council.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council staff involved in preparing for or responding to a disaster or disruptive event.¹

3 POLICY

Council is committed to building the capability of the organisation to continue delivery of services at acceptable predefined levels following disasters and disruptive events. It will do this by:

1. maintaining a current Business Continuity Management Policy (BCM Policy)
2. developing a Business Continuity Program (BC Program)
3. developing a Business Continuity Management Framework (BCM Framework) to support the deliverables of Council's BC Program
4. developing a Business Continuity Plan (BC Plan)
5. establishing governance for BC Management
6. assigning roles and responsibilities for BC Management.

In developing and implementing the BC Policy, Council has several objectives, which include:

- safeguarding lives, welfare and confidence of all Council stakeholders, including Councillors, employees, volunteers, contractors, visitors, ratepayers and the general public
- safeguarding Council assets
- quickly recovering and resuming Council's critical business functions, services and activities
- mitigating financial loss
- identifying measures that help to minimise the potential for disruptive events.

¹ Certain disaster situations may require an Emergency Service agency response. Under these circumstances, any direction provided by an authorised person of an Emergency Service agency must be followed without exception or regard to this policy.

4 BUSINESS CONTINUITY PROGRAM

The objective of the BC Program is to establish an ongoing set of BC Management activities that support the implementation of the BCM Policy.

4.1 BC PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The scope of Council's BC Program incorporates the elements of BC Management and includes:

- reviewing the scope of the BC Program
- reviewing the governance of the BC program
- reviewing roles and responsibilities of the BC program
- raising awareness about business continuity
- encouraging buy-in from stakeholders
- ensuring required competencies and skills are in place
- ensuring appropriate training and learning opportunities are provided
- identification of critical business functions
- development of business continuity plans for critical business functions
- assisting managers of critical business functions in determining solutions to business continuity requirements
- advocating for the implementation of identified and agreed solutions
- ensuring training, testing, assessing, practising and improving of the business continuity capability of the organisation.

5 BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The BCM Framework provides further guidance on key elements of the BC Program.

5.1 AWARENESS

Key components for embedding BC Program awareness include:

- including BC Management as part of the induction process
- communicating the importance of BC Management into Council culture
- planned activities, such as business continuity exercises, that achieve an appropriate level of awareness and which clarify roles and responsibilities
- participative training through involvement in formal training programs for key staff identified in Business Continuity Plans (BCPs).

5.2 IDENTIFYING CRITICAL BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

The BC Program requires the identification of the services defined as critical business functions. Each critical business function will have an individual business continuity plan, within the Business Continuity Plan (BCP), guided by the principles contained in the BCM Framework for the continuation of the service to a minimum acceptable level during a disruption. Critical business functions are identified by conducting a business impact analysis (BIA).

More detail about Council's critical business functions is contained in the Business Continuity Plan.

5.3 BUSINESS IMPACT ANALYSIS

A Business Impact Analysis (BIA) is the process to identify critical business functions and records all skills, resources, services, systems, infrastructure, interdependencies and suppliers (both internal and external) required by each of these functions to develop Business Continuity Plans (BC Plan). It assesses each function to identify gaps and determine the impact over time of a business disruption. It estimates the time frames at which not resuming these activities would become unacceptable to Council and estimates recovery timings.

The BC Plan prioritises restoration of these activities in the event of a disruption. It takes into account tangible financial impacts of a disruption (e.g. increased cost of working, loss of revenue, fines, and penalties) and intangible and non-financial impacts (e.g. reputational, legal, regulatory, and customer servicing impact).

Council will use the Business Continuity Institute Good Practice Guidelines (GPG, 2018) to underpin its BIA process.

BIAs will be undertaken once per year for each directorate.

5.4 BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS

All business unit BC Plans should include:

- identified and defined critical business functions and the priority of their restoration
- peak periods (e.g. seasonal) and disruption threats
- Maximum Tolerable Period of Disruption - Identified maximum period of time that Council can tolerate the loss of a process or function before a serious impact on operations or service delivery
- Recovery Time Objective - The period of time following an incident within which a product or an activity must be resumed or resources must be recovered
- Recovery Point Objectives - The point to which information used by an activity must be restored to enable the activity to operate on resumption
- assets affected by a disruptive event
- physical resources available
- resources needed if a disruption event occurs
- business continuity plan activation, roles, responsibilities and succession plans for unavailable staff.

The BC Plan will:

- take full account of, and comply with the BCM Framework
- be reviewed following each major change that affects strategies
- be securely held on and off site and be readily accessible by all of its potential users through tablet devices or other electronic means
- contain related documents that are up to date and reflect Council's current requirements
- be reviewed annually.

To support business continuity, Council has a supporting Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan (ITDRP).

5.5 RECOVERY STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS

Selection of recovery strategies and solutions must consider the requirements to recover from all disruption related scenarios within the identified time frames thereby limiting the impact of disruption. Recovery strategies and solutions will aim to:

- identify measures that can reduce the likelihood of disruption to prioritised functions
- shorten the period of disruption for prioritised functions
- ensure the safe and timely restoration of all affected critical functions
- remain up to date and reflect current business requirements
- be reviewed annually
- be current, fully comprehensive, reviewed and signed off by the MEG.

5.6 EXERCISE AND TESTING

Key components of the BC Management exercise phase are:

- a formal BC Management exercise program covering all operations will be in place, and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The program ensures that each exercise has clearly defined aims, objectives and success criteria that are authorised by MEG
- an exercise program that ensures each exercise has a post-exercise report with corrective recommendations, including timeframes for implementation
- an exercise program that ensures all electronic and paper documents, critical systems and telecommunications, recovery worksites, control centre, critical suppliers and outsourced (including third party) recovery capabilities are tested at least annually
- a program that ensures all plans will be tested at least annually as per the International Standard ISO22301:2019 (ISO22301) Business Continuity Management Systems– Requirements and in line with Good Practice Guidelines.

5.7 TRAINING

Business continuity training for all Business Continuity Team (BC Team) members is essential for an effective response to a disruptive event. Relevant staff must understand activation trigger points and maintain competency. Relevant training, for example desktop training (at a minimum) will be undertaken on an annual basis and will include alternates for key roles.

6 GOVERNANCE

The BCM Policy will be approved by Council following review and endorsement by the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).

The Management Executive Group (MEG) is responsible for monitoring the BC Program.

The Manager Governance is responsible for the implementation of the BCM Policy, BC Program, and BC Plans.

7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MEG will:

- oversee and advise BC Management to ensure best practice, and compliance with the BCM Policy.

The Manager Governance will:

- develop and manage the BC Program, making recommendations, and reporting to ARC
- act as the BC Plan owner by ensuring it adequately reflects the organisation's business continuity capability.

Business unit managers will:

- communicate the implications of changes that may impact the BC Program
- conduct BIA and collect information for business unit BCPs
- review and update business unit BCPs as requested by business continuity plan owner
- conduct and participate in exercises.

Employees will:

- acknowledge roles and responsibilities in relation to business continuity including the need to:
 - understand relevant BCP and associated roles and responsibilities.
 - respond appropriately to direction relating to BCP.

Further information on the roles and responsibilities in relation to BC Plans can be found in the BC Plan.

8 MONITOR AND REVIEW

The success of BC Management will be measured against the following:

- whether the policy is current
- the extent to which business continuity has been incorporated into MEG and ARC meeting agendas
- a BCP has been developed and/or reviewed for relevant business units within the last 12 months, and endorsed by MEG and ARC
- business continuity test has been conducted in the past 12 months.

9 APPROVAL AND COMMUNICATION

Following the adoption of this policy by Council, all staff will be informed of its adoption.

10 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are minor budget implications for management of a BC program; there may be budget implications should a disruptive event ever occur.

11 RISK ASSESSMENT

This policy has been developed to minimise the risks associated with disruptive events. Risk assessment of the associated disruption scenarios will be consistent with Council's Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Framework.

12 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS OR ABBREVIATIONS USED

Term	Definition
Business Continuity Management (BC Management)	A process for building the capability of the organisation to continue delivery of services at acceptable predefined levels following disasters and disruptive incidents
Business Continuity Management Framework (BCM Framework)	Detailed information that elaborates on the key deliverables of the BC Program.
Business Continuity Management Policy (BCM Policy)	Loddon Shire Council's approach to BC Management.
Business Continuity Plan (BC Plan)	An approved and tested document with instructions/actions that provide guidance on critical business functions' restoration to minimise the impact of a disruptive event.
Business Continuity Program (BC Program)	A set of business continuity activities that support the implementation of the BCM Policy.
Disruptive event	A sudden, unplanned event causing significant inconvenience, damage or loss.
Critical business functions	Critical business functions are business functions, or part thereof, identified as essential for the continuance of the organisation and achievement of its critical objectives.
Maximum Tolerable Period of Disruption	Identified maximum period of time that Council can tolerate the loss of a process or function before a serious impact on operations or service delivery.
Recovery Point Objectives	The point to which information used by an activity must be restored to enable the activity to operate on resumption
Recovery Time Objective	The period of time following an incident within which a product or an activity must be resumed or resources must be recovered
Risk management	Coordinated activities to direct and control an organisation regarding risk (Standards Australia Limited/Standards New Zealand, ISO 31000:2018 Australian Standard Risk Management Guidelines).

13 HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights Act.

Loddon Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. The Council will formally involve elected employee Health and Safety Representatives in any workplace change that may affect the health and safety of any of its employees.

A Gender Impact Assessment of this policy has been undertaken with no negative gendered impacts identified.

14 REVIEW

The Manager Governance will review this policy for any necessary amendments no later than 4 years after adoption of this current version.