

Humanitarian Response Policy

Detail of Policy

Short Title	Humanitarian Response Policy
Division	Community Services
Category	Community
File No	C04-0034
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COUNCIL POLICY

Definition

For the purposes of this policy “humanitarian response” will refer to action taken to save lives, maintain human dignity and ease suffering in the aftermath of both natural and man-made disasters. Any assistance must be neutral, impartial and independent, i.e. there will be no economic or political influences directing or influencing such a response.¹ A disaster will be a calamitous event resulting in loss of life, great human suffering and distress and large scale damage.²

Policy Statement

Council shall seek to assist needy communities, both locally and overseas, to recover from the effects of both man-made and natural disasters through effective, co-ordinated and timely humanitarian response.

Policy Objectives

- To assist disaster affected areas in the recovery process not only for the short and medium terms but also to initiate longer term responses that work towards sustaining communities into the future.
- To give priority for support to communities that are particularly vulnerable i.e. due to the extreme impact of the disaster or an inability to access adequate resources to aid in the recovery process.
- To provide opportunities for the Willoughby community to work with Council in assisting disaster affected areas.
- To protect human life during and after a humanitarian crisis, by reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening local communities.

¹ Humanitarian Action Plan, Australian Government AusAID, January 2005, p.3

² The Code Of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief, Australian Council for International Development website (ACFID), 2005 p.1

Policy Implementation

Council will endeavour to respond to humanitarian appeals by pursuing any of the below mentioned strategies or any others determined by Council to be appropriate. It should be noted that Council will not always have the capacity to respond to a humanitarian crisis. Response strategies will be actioned depending on priority of need with Council determining which communities can effectively be assisted under this policy.

The Global Friendship Committee, under the guidance of Council, will act as the key body to action any strategies. Should a crisis occur the Committee will be called upon as a matter of urgency to co-ordinate a timely response strategy. Should a crisis occur that cannot be addressed in a timely manner by the Committee, Council or the General Manager and Mayor under delegated authority, can action any response strategies.

Council will only work with charities and Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) that are officially recognised and/or registered e.g. The Australian Council for International Development registers NGOs and administers a Code of Conduct to ensure accountability and integrity.

Strategies

The strategies indicated below are to be used as a guide and should be considered only if determined to be the most appropriate depending on the disaster situation. Any action will require Council endorsement.

- Liaise with the Australian Local Government & Shires Association to identify any co-ordinated response strategies
- Facilitate both internal and external fundraising activities through registered charities. Activities might include; raffles, donation appeals, charity balls or dinners, family fun runs or other sponsored sporting events, salary sacrifice by Council staff.
- Co-ordinate donations of resources e.g. pharmaceutical supplies with the assistance of a registered NGO.
- Promote fundraising activities co-ordinated by external local organisations e.g. Rotary, church groups, etc. via Council publications and the website.
- Provide free venue hire to organisations undertaking fundraising activities
- Create a register of volunteers
- Give a one off cash donation via a recognised charity
- Support any staff wishing to register with volunteering agencies (e.g. provide financial compensation should they be assigned to assist in the relief effort).
- Memorial service and condolence book
- Establish a Friendly City relationship with an affected area to ensure long term assistance that can be monitored and evaluated
- Skills exchange between Council and affected areas
- Sponsor children or schools in affected areas