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Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 – Planning Reforms and Gender Equity



Emerald Community House, Centre of Resilience is launching **#SDG5 Initiative** in response to the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. The **#SDG5 Initiative** activates the UN Sustainable Development Goal # 5 by requiring the Victorian government to commit to 50% membership of women on both the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees (MEMPC) and the Regional Emergency Management Planning Committees (REMPC). This is not about quotas - it's about equitable representation and inclusion for planning.

Background

The challenges for women in their everyday lives in Victoria pose a threat to their wellbeing in disasters, coupled with domestic violence and financial disadvantage. There is a compounded risk of negative outcomes, even in urban disasters with a dense population, for women and for those who may be in their care. Because gender inequality negatively impacts women, the application of gender equity, empowerment and inclusion in planning as well as relief, response, recovery and resilience roles has the potential to improve the broader wellbeing outcomes for women, their children and their families in disaster risk reduction.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has identified that cultural restrictions, lack of appropriate skills and less physical strength all contribute to women and girls becoming disproportionate victims of disasters. In Victoria, the idea of traditional roles and responsibilities continues to present obstacles for women in participating in decision-making, skill development or gaining access to resources. Planning and decision making should include those who work in the local community sector - a key interface for successful emergency management. Victoria's emergency management planning and the community at large will benefit from a fair inclusion of women representatives (50%) as active members on Municipal *and* Regional Emergency Management Planning Committees.

As advised by the Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook (AIDR 2018), community development strengthens the community's ability to absorb stresses and raises collective resilience overall to better manage adverse events in the short and long term. The community development and caring/services sectors, forecasted to see real growth in employment over the coming years, are overwhelmingly represented by experienced women as employees and volunteers according to the ABS.

Proposal

The Emerald Community House's Centre of Resilience is seeking public support and endorsement of our **#SDG5 Initiative** by the Minister for Emergency Services as well as local candidates throughout Victoria. We advocate for the Minister's guidelines for MEMPCs and REMPCs to ensure that at least 50% of the active membership of these committees be composed of women members, including the makeup of subcommittees, especially from the community sector in the local at risk communities. If we are placing the community at the *centre* of emergency management goals, then community representatives, made up of at least 50% women, need to be at the planning and decision making table.

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