



NORTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL

POLICY MANUAL

MANAGEMENT OF DONATED GOODS AFTER A DISASTER

Originated Date: Adopted 19 July 2010, Min. No. 173/10 (as Policy 60)

Amended Date/s: Amended 20 August 2018 – Min. No. 230/18
Amended 21 September 2015 – Min. No. 270/15

Applicable Legislation:

Objective

- 1) To ensure best practice methods are employed to manage donated goods after a disaster
- 2) To inform Northern Midlands residents on Council's policy with regard to managing donated goods after a disaster.

Administration: Governance

Review Cycle/Date: Next review 2019.

BACKGROUND

The Australian Government released the report "Management of Donated Goods after a disaster" in February 2010. The report investigated the phenomenon of unsolicited donations following recent disasters across Australia. The researchers found that the management of unsolicited donated goods creates major problems after a disaster. A large proportion of what is donated is unusable but recovery managers are still required to put significant efforts into administration of the goods e.g.. unpacking, sorting, storing and distribution. Disposal at the end of the disaster also required major effort.

The 2009 Victorian bushfires illustrate this well.

"The Victorian bushfires resulted in the donation of in excess of 40,000 pallets of goods from across Australia that took up more than 50,000 square metres of storage space. The costs for managing these donations i.e. 3 central warehouses, 5 regional distribution points, approximately 35 paid staff, material handling equipment and transport costs to distribute the material aid, has amounted to over 8 million dollars. In addition, volunteer numbers reached 1,500 during the first 3 months provided through over 40 shop fronts. Resources in the fire affected areas immediately after the event were severely stretched as a result of the material aid arriving without warning and without adequate resources to sort, store, handle and distribute."

Experience from this and other disasters indicates that a large proportion of what was donated may be either unwanted or unusable and eventually have to be disposed of, causing further expenditure and possible outrage from the public.

The report contains the viewpoints of community recovery personnel as well as the recipients of donated goods. It concludes with recommendations for the improved management of donated goods in the future.

One of the key recommendations for managing the communities desire to donate is to establish a Hotline phone/website and registry. Council has resolved to implement this recommendation.

POLICY

Council has a Hotline phone/website that local community members and businesses can access after a disaster to register their offers of assistance.

At this point of contact very clear scripts are used that include the following key messages:

- Thanking people for their concern and offer of assistance;
- The best way to assist is to provide cash donations;
- Advice about what is not required e.g. individual donations of food, second-hand clothing and furniture, tents etc.;
- If people register their contact details and offer of donation, they will be contacted if there is an identified need for the offer they have made;
- Other community options for the donation of second hand goods, such as local charities.

Information on this policy is included in the new residents kit and is publicised regularly in the local community newspapers.