Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) Survey Findings

April 2018

What is CERA?

CERA is an all hazards risk assessment tool which aims to reduce risk within the community. The risk assessments are performed under the guidance of a VICSES facilitator at Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committies (MEMPC) level and used to support and inform their planning, mitigation and response to hazards. The integrity of the risk assessment outcomes is reliant on having the relevant subject matter experts and agencies in the room to provide key information, guide discussions and assist with validating risks. The current CERA process is not specifically based on science, however with the relevant agencies represented they are able to assist in providing the science behind why the municipality is at a particular level of risk.
Further information on CERA and collated CERA Results can be found in the VICSES CERA Findings Report 2016-17: VICSES CERA Findings Report 2016-17

The need for review

With ISO3100 and NERAG both due for new releases with updates in 2018 and to ensure the CERA process is still meeting the needs of the participants, VICSES is looking at potentially reviewing CERA. The review and any enhancements are not to change the risk assessment process or intent of CERA, but to potentially enhance the tool, make the information more accessible and ensure the tool is best meeting the needs and expectations of Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees (MEMPCs) and other key stakeholders.

The survey and next steps

The CERA Survey aimed to seek advice from participants and key stakeholders who use the risk assessment process and the tool itself as well as the various output products. The results from the survey have been collated and will be used as part of a process to help inform potential enhancements and the next steps on all-hazards risk assessment moving forward.

53 responses were received from the survey consisting of 8 short questions. The results have been interpreted and summarised to show the key findings from each questions.

From here it is VICSES intention to outline business requirements based on survey results to take to developers and existing platforms to see if they can meet the needs of CERA. Following this VICSES will need to seek funding opportunities to support enhancements to the tool.

If you are a MEMPC member and you would like access to your CERA workbook please contact your local VICSES ROEM or Regional Office who will be able to provide the most current information.

Any feedback or questions relating to CERA or the CERA Survey Results Summary please direct to Emergency Management Planning: **emp@ses.vic.gov.au**

Who completed the survey?

Where are you from?

12

41
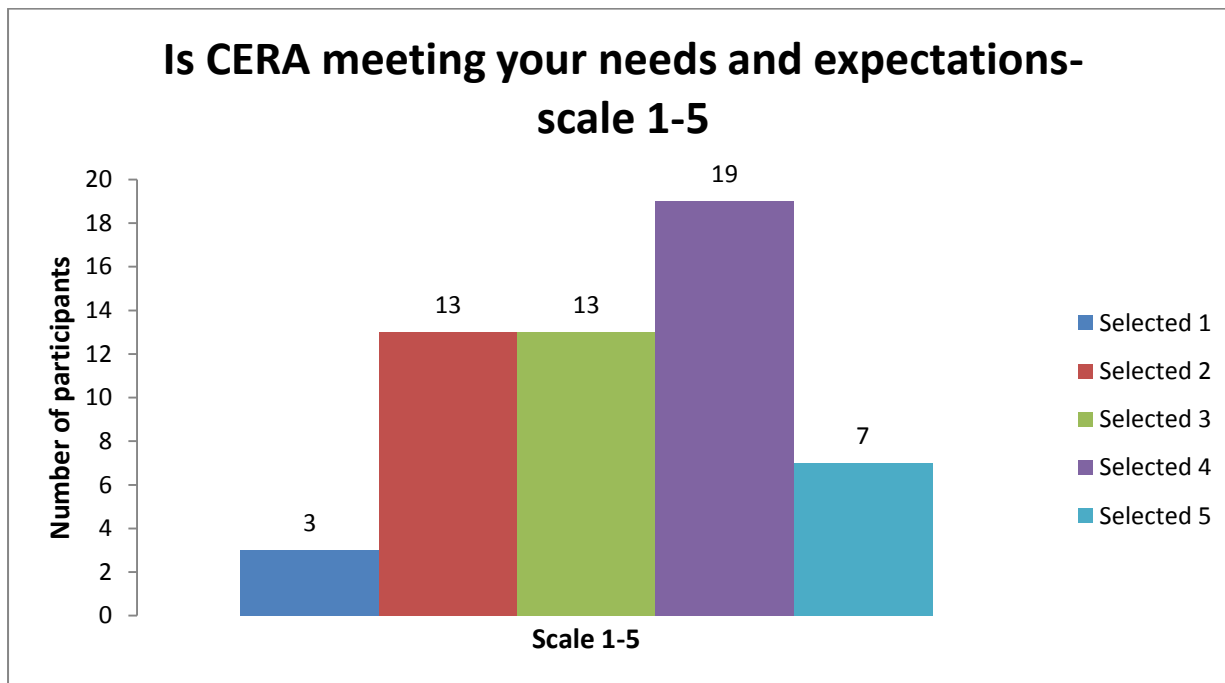
Other 'agency'- MEMP Committee Member
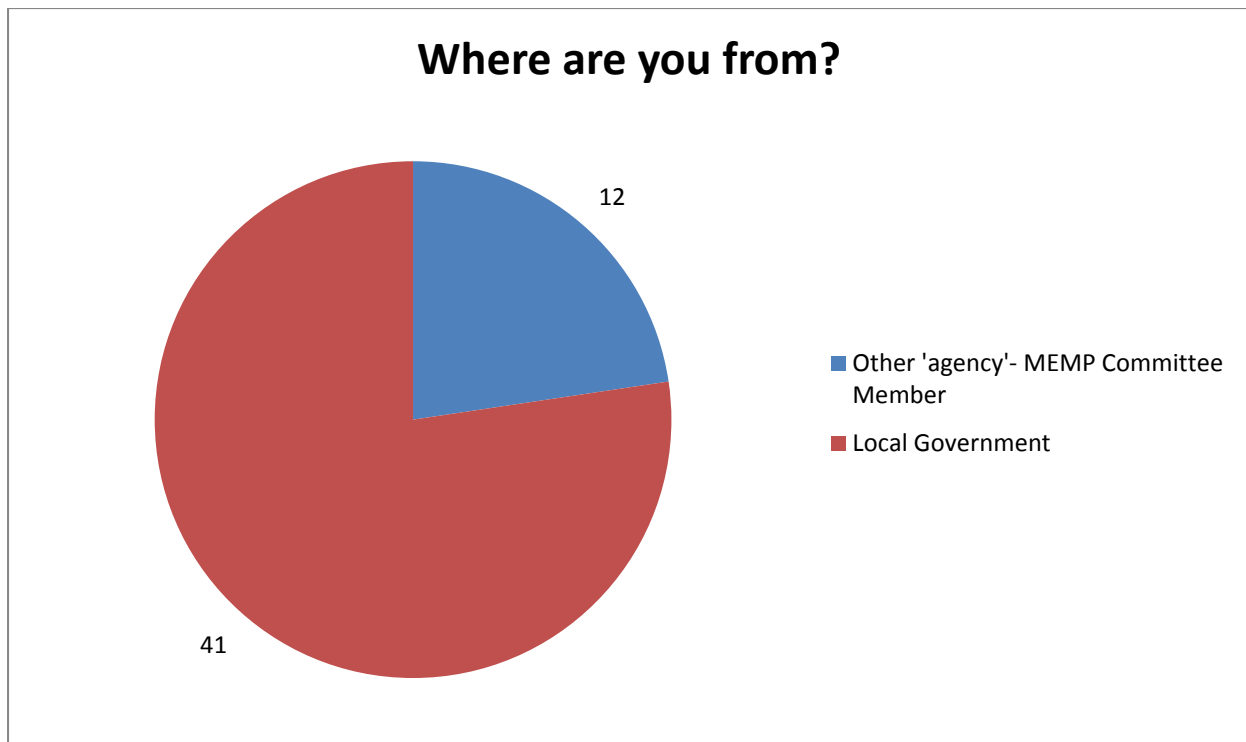
Local Government

Summary:
The majority of respondants to the survey were from local government and can be assumed they are most likely members on the MEMPC. 12 other MEMPC members also provided feedback. These are key users of the final product and are required to include some aspects in the MEMP. Prior feedback was already received from VICSES facilitators which will also contribute towards overall analysis.

Question 1. Is CERA currently meeting your needs and expectations to support Emergency Management Planning and its inclusion in the MEMP? Please add any additional comments on why or why not.

Scale of: 1-Not at all, 5-Absolutely

Is CERA meeting your needs and expectations-scale 1-5

A bar chart titled "Is CERA meeting your needs and expectations-scale 1-5". The y-axis is labelled "Number of participants" ranging from 0 to 20. The x-axis is labelled "Scale 1-5".

- Selected 1: 3
- Selected 2: 13
- Selected 3: 13
- Selected 4: 19
- Selected 5: 7

Summary:

The results show that CERA is still currently meeting the needs and expectation to support Emergency Management Planning with 74% of participants selecting between 3-5.

Some of the positive comments included:

- User friendly process that allows meaningful analysis of the output
- Helps focus on likely events/ risks
- CERA provides justification for risk ratings and assist in addressing the risks
- Risk assessment process is good
- Assists in decision making
- Used for planning and funding applications

Some comments to consider where needs and expectaions are not being met:

- Needs to be more available and a living document rather than sitting waiting until next review
- Does not consider consequence planning
- Struggle to get agencies to commit and represent at meetings which skews results
- Tool is clunky to use, not user friendly and seems incomplete
- Lacks community input
- The process is slow and confusing
- Not backed by any science
- More engagement of subject matter experts

Question 2. What are the biggest issues with the CERA Tool currently and how could it be improved?

Biggest issues with CERA
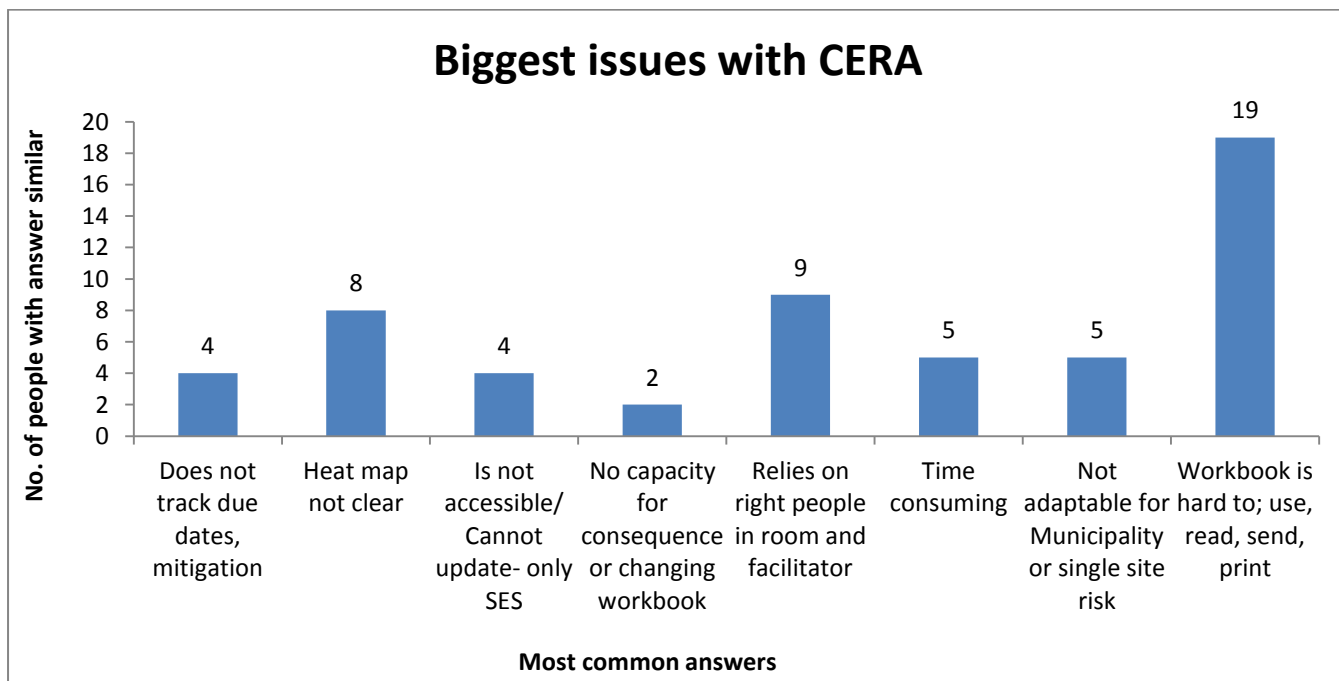
Summary:

Participants were asked to comment on the biggest issues they experience with CERA. It is clear from the results that the workbook itself poses the greatest issue that participants experience. Many of the comments were based around the workbook being somewhat cumbersome and they were unable to print, view the information clearly, read and send the large file.

It was also mentioned several times that the heat map does not represent the risk summary well and would be more beneficial if it was clearer and did not overlap data.

Other issues is that CERA is led and facilitated by VICSES, however the municipality own the risk but do not have the ability to edit the data.

Participants would like the tool to track mitigation actions, send reminders for due dates and be able to adapt what information is extracted for their MEMP.

It is clear that statewide agencies may not own their role in the CERA and MEMPC process which could have effects on the CERA results. Better understanding of the importance of their role and supporting material would assist with having the knowledge in the room.

Question 3. Do the following currently meet your needs and expectations? (required) If yes- how do you use them, if no- how could they be improved? (required)

- o Summary heat map/ bubbles
- o Risk Sheets
- o Consolidated actions
- o LGA profile

If the participant selected ones that did meet their needs (Yes). The assumption has been made that if they didn't select one in question 3 is it therefore not meeting their needs (no).
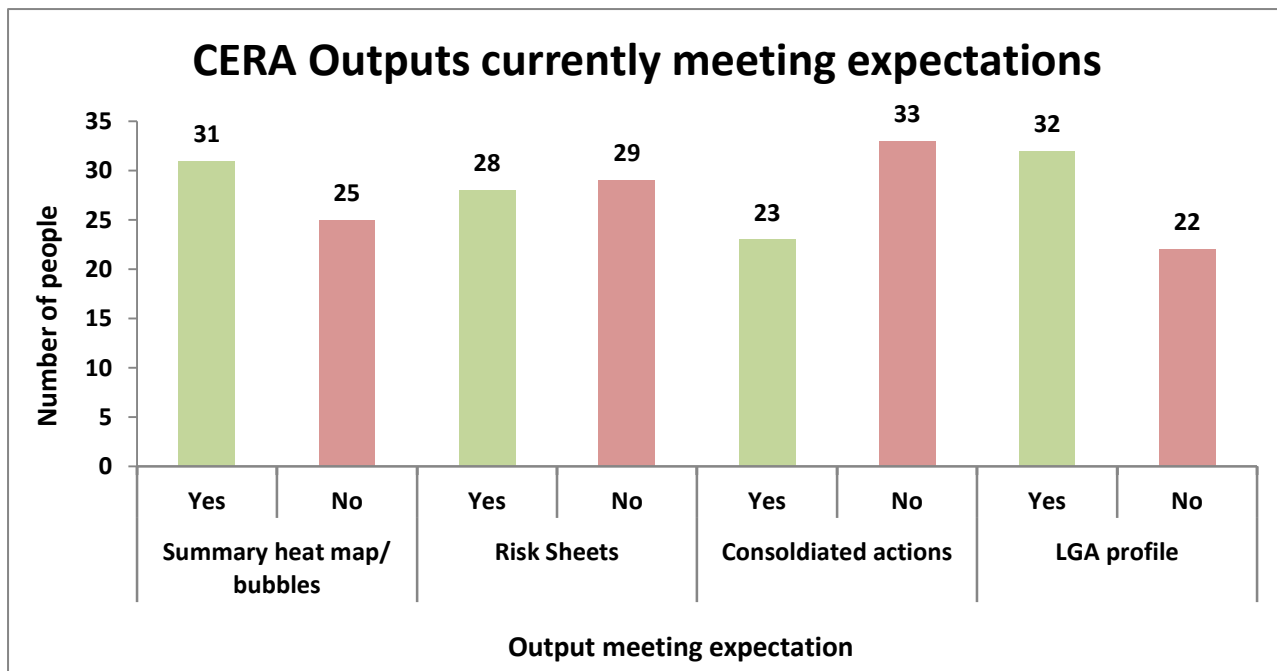
Summary:

Results show that the output products from CERA are largely meeting user expectations. This could be because they have to use some evidence in their MEMPC or some municipalities purely rely on the data from CERA and do not use anything different. The use of outputs is spread fairly evenly and it is evident that as each municipality look at risk differently, having various options for outputs is desirable. Despite results indicating that the outputs are meeting expectations, the second part of the question where they were given the opportunity to ask how they are being used and if there are improvements highlights that they are not entirely happy with the current suite of products. The LGA profile seemed to meet most people's needs with more than 50% of participants selecting it.

How the outputs are being used:
Published in MEMP
Consolidated report to provide summary
Clarifies improvement opportunities
Assist with monitoring and reviewing
Heat map is a good visual
Develop action plan based on risks to target community and build resilience
Assist decision making process

Improvements:
LGA profile should already be in MEMP and not needed in CERA outputs
Consolidated actions are repeated as they apply to many risks
Heat map only talks about risk levels
Heat map is difficult to use as bubbles overlap and can be hidden
Formatting needs to be fixed so it can be printed
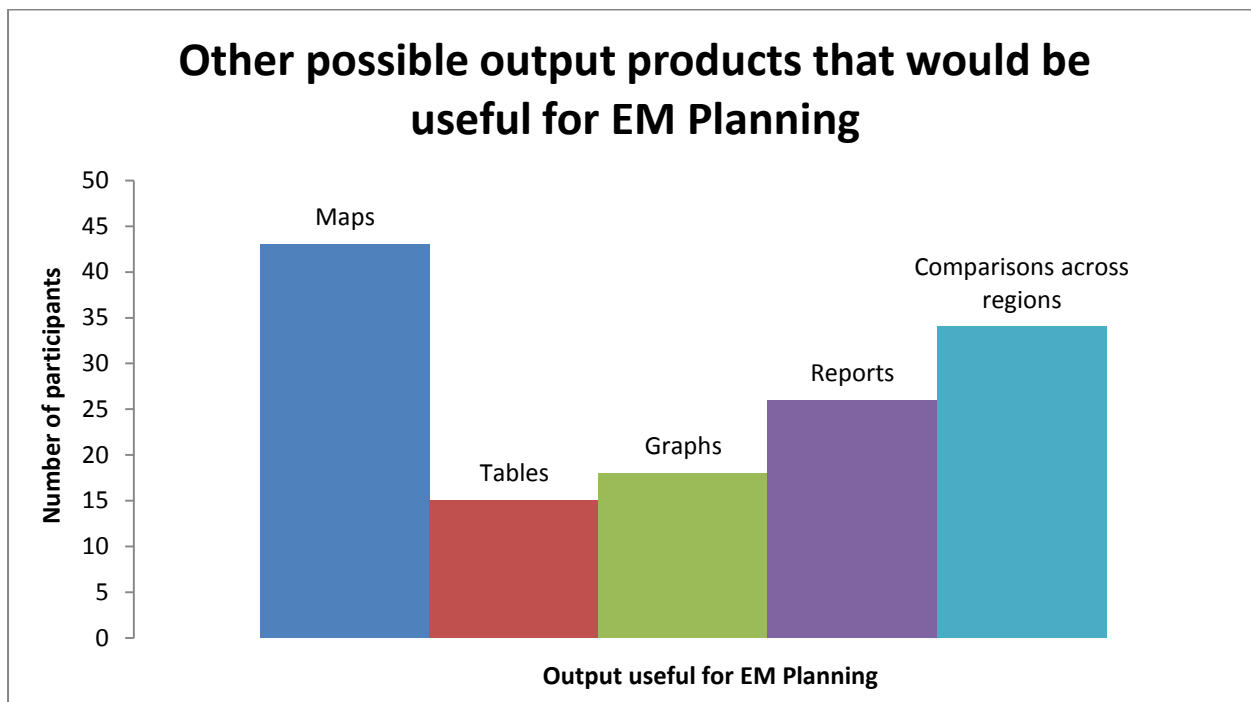Ensure lead agency take ownership of consolidated actions
Council needs to be able to modify to fit in with plan
More comprehensive treatments and recording actions
Precise detail, less wordy

Question 4. What are other possible output products that would be useful to you for EM planning purposes? (required) Please specify how the output product would assist in MEMP (required).
- o Maps
- o Tables
- o Graphs
- o Reports
- o Comparisons across regions

Other possible output products that would be useful for EM Planning

A bar chart titled "Other possible output products that would be useful for EM Planning". The y-axis is labelled "Number of participants" ranging from 0 to 50. The x-axis is labelled "Output useful for EM Planning". Bars: Maps ≈ 43, Tables ≈ 15, Graphs ≈ 18, Reports ≈ 26, Comparisons across regions ≈ 34.

Summary:
From the 53 people who participated in the survey, 43 identified maps as being an additional useful output product to assist with their EM Planning. A lot of participants also indicated that having the ability to compare data across regions would be useful as well as reports that would potentially collate the raw data and summarise CERA findings into a report.

How would the output assist in MEMP?
The following specific feedback was received relating to adiditional possible outputs:
Need to have an output product that is concise and 1 page per risk with residual risk
A heat map would provide visual aid of risk, currently too text heavy
Consolidate an overall view of risks
Graphically represent information
Graphs will help internally with planning treatments and targeting risk
Run a report that shows due and outstanding actions
Melways style maps representing risk to visualise- show highest risk, helps with area familiarity and specific locations of risks
Simple Datacom Systems Victoria
Region comparison would assist with shared protocol across councils, look at common strategies, be able to share ideas and resources and validate risks identified
Reports would help with MEMP consistency
Outputs that are succinct and aesthetically pleasing that can be converted to an image and included in the MEMP to give a clear understanding of risk.
Outline where specific risks are

Question 5. What information is missing that could assist in developing or enhancing MEMP? (required)

Summary:
When asked how to enhance CERA not all participants took the opportunity to comment.
Many seemed happy with the process but found some improvements which would make them happier to use and trust the results.
Many of the comments were around access to the workbook and for municipalities to be able to edit the information as required. This would make it more beneficial for the most common improvement made which is ability to track mitigation actions. If participants could access the workbook they could update mitigation and work out residual risk. An ability to edit the workbook could also improve the time commitment currently required for the process to gather all the information and could improve the participation of more stakeholders which are currently not attending meetings as required.
There is also a need for training to municipalities on the purpose of CERA. This is currently not clear to some people and with a high turnover of council staff there needs to be easy access to understand the purpose and process.
Lastly, consequence planning was raised several times as a gap in the CERA process but also accross municipal planning more broadly. This could be an opportunity for CERA to lead the way in consequence planning by providing useful information for the committees to utilise.

Missing information:
Specifc responses in relation to missing information included:
Statewide risks which could be pre-populated or have more
Consequence planning
Historical data that shows residual risk over time after actions have been completed. This would show if treatments are working or not.
Access to the worksheet
Consistent advice in what to include in MEMP
Layered risks on maps
Linkage between agency risk/ response plans and Municipal Plans
Status report on mitigation activity
More guidance from state about known risks and state risks that must be considered by sub-committees
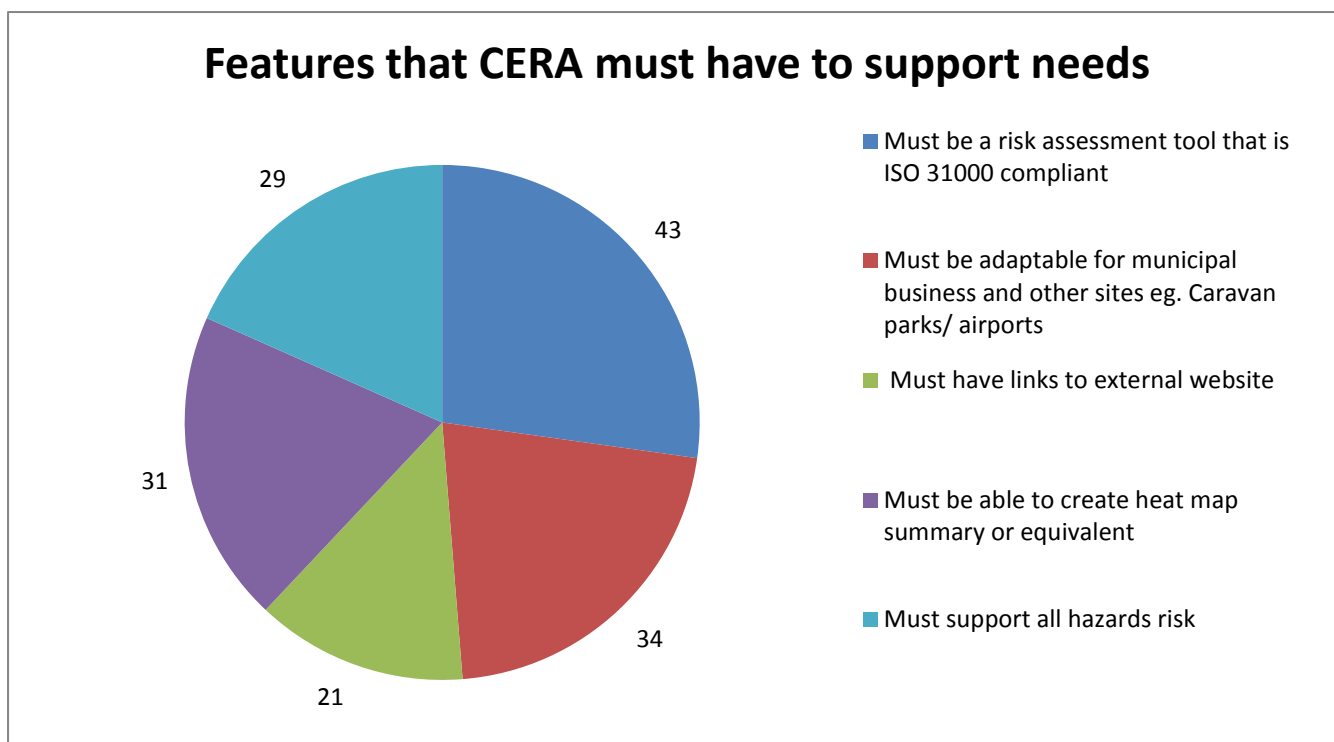Mapping layers
Maps of risks
Training/ information for committee to understand the purpose of CERA
A statement on accepting residual risk and also defining the triggers that escalate the treatment of risks where locally it can't be managed
Subject matter experts being in the room and not contributing to the CERA process- may get more buy in if it was less time consuming

Question 6. What are the features that CERA or any future risk assessment tool must have to support your needs? (required) Other- Please specify (required).

Features that CERA must have to support needs

Legend:
- Must be a risk assessment tool that is ISO 31000 compliant
- Must be adaptable for municipal business and other sites eg. Caravan parks/ airports
- Must have links to external website
- Must be able to create heat map summary or equivalent
- Must support all hazards risk

Values shown: 43, 34, 21, 31, 29

Summary:
Nearly all participants still recognise CERA as a tool that is compliant with ISO 31000 and see this as a necessity and a tool they will use into the future. In line with comments from other questions the participants value access to the CERA data and would like the ability to be able to take the data and adapt it as required.

The second part of the question was made a requirement in hope we could get some suggestions of what CERA needs that we have not identified yet. There were minimal responses to this part but some good answers were still received which can be used to guide future enhancements.

These other suggestions include:
An App to be developed for voting
More subject matter experts
Include consequence planning
Done at regional level
A function to list all municipality specific actions
Ability to hyper link between non editable material (if the CERA was on centralized point like EMCOP) to the MEMP or other agencies web pages for ease of communication on risks and actions.
Ability to create various reports on risks/ risk ratings and action timeframes.
Edit heat map and spreadsheet
Link to other tools and agency work eg Crisis Works
Risks identified at state/ regional level not a list of 80 potential to plan for
Used at community level that doesn't affect whole municipality
Link to audit schedule with templated review guidance
Easy to amend the risks (perhaps use a program other than excel)
Integrate CERA into other processes (requirement for reporting by each stakeholder).
Online tool

Link with neighbouring municipalities

*Note - There were some initial issues with question 6, the first six responses were only able to select one answer option, however some did write additional answers in the 'other suggestions' section.

Question 7. What are some features that would be nice to have in CERA that are currently not available? (required) Comments on features and other suggestions (required).
- o Create a map- If yes, what would the map show?
- o Add in supporting mapping layers- If yes, what supporting layers?
- o Always be accessible and allow for ongoing suggested changes and notes by committee members?
- o Create different statistics reports and graphs from the data- if so, what would the graphs show?
- o Show historic data?
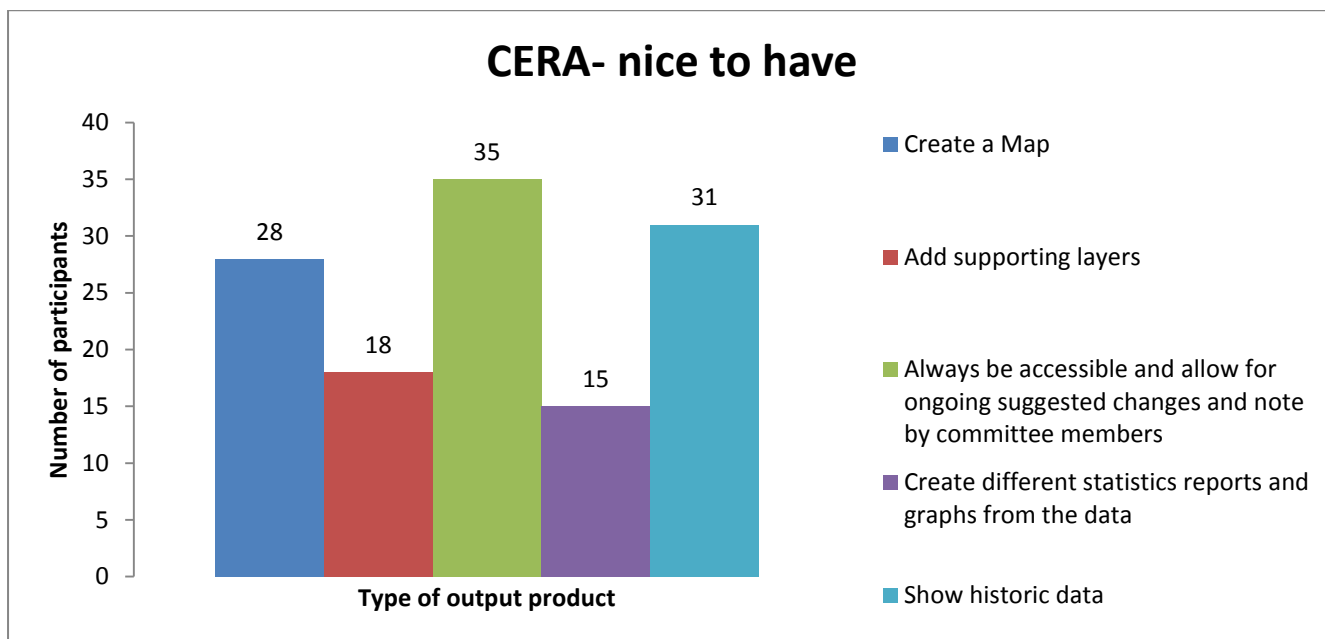
CERA- nice to have

Summary:
This question was based on feedback already received from the CERA working group of things the facilitators thought would be nice to have in CERA. The question had two parts, multiple choice to prompt responders on ideas CERA could do and a follow up of how the information would be used and options to submit unique ideas or comments. Consistent with previous results top results show those participants would like to have the ability to create a map (28), and be able to access the information incorporated into CERA. Ability to look at historic data was highlighted as very important by both participants in this survey and SES facilitators.

Part two of the question allowed for participants to add comments for each "nice to have feature" or suggest their own ideas.

Additional participant comments:
Easier to update, easier to read and print and easier to send each risk individually instead of whole document
Web based/ EM-COP
Develop a voting app- button system not always working or available
Revealing the calculations (likelihood, consequence, and rating) to compare over time
Map- show location of specific risks to assist with treatments, consequence, vulnerable populations
Be able to review notes and information to see historic change
Comparison data to demonstrate changes in risk and hazards
Supporting Layers- human settlement areas (heat map based on density), land title information
Graphs- levels of residual risk over time

When risks are reviewed and are considered not a high risk anymore, the title in the risk worksheet disappears. It would be nice to have this not deleted so it can be reviewed as required
Currently a standalone tool the ability to link with hazard specific products such as the VFRR and Flood Zoom and other similar products
Integrate with council mapping

Question 8 Please Provide any further comments or suggestions

Summary:

Participants were given the opportunity to make further comments and suggestions.

About half the participants chose to provide further comments with ideas. Many reiterated the need for the process to involve the community, have access to the work book and for the workbook to be more users friendly.

Some new suggestions that came through were having the tool online or utilising existing systems such as EMCOP and the creation of an app for the voting system instead of the buttons.

There were some comments in relation to VICSES involvement in the CERA process which imply further training and instructions around what CERA is and roles and responsibilities. VICSES is in some cases perceived as not putting in enough time in some areas and council doing the work. This may be due to a misconception that because VICSES facilitate the process and maintain the workbook that they are responsible for putting the information into the MEMP and following up on the treatments. The process and use of CERA needs to be highlighted as a multi risk and multi-agency tool.

Participant comments:

- Discuss consequence planning further

- The actual electronic format (excel or csv) of CERA seems a little clunky and not as user friendly when accessing from tablet or smartphone. Could be redesigned a little better to be more intuitive/user friendly.

- A clear distinction between a municipal risk / regional risk and state risk. - there is still confusion and duplication of work.

- Invite more people along to the meeting, including community members. A large number of people in the room have previously been discouraged however this should be seen as a community engagement tool.

- Easier reports for committees to read.

- Let the community put their input in online, then just the EM practitioners synthesise it. It's too hard getting the right community representation, so give up and let people contribute online. You'd get better take up. Also, this process needs to be driven, completed and owned by the SES, not Council.

- The framework is meant to be based on 'community' however there is no guidance on how the MEMPC should undertake the process with the community so most would only discuss it within a MEMPC meeting. Most of the hazards are 'standard' (e.g. heatwave, structure fire, flash flood) and will have exactly the same causes and impacts across municipalities. Why not create pre-filled templates for these hazards which can be added to rather than duplicating the effort over and over. DHHS and MFB already have templates developed for CERA containing standard/common information. If a whole new structure is formulated there needs to be guidance on how to transfer the data. In the last change this was not communicated and it was difficult to understand where the old data fitted into the new structure.

- How to address risks that are located outside your municipal footprint, but have a direct impact on your council and there is no effective treatments- eg landslide threat to water supply or treatments that the relevant authority is willing to commit to.

- The present process is time consuming and delays in visiting / rolling out impact preparation of plans down stream.

- MEMP itself constantly referring to the work and progressively updating their understanding in areas things will work better. this means that they need a simple system to understand following the regular review, what they have considered and what they need to work on. then a process to update review etc. regularly

- We have decided to engage a consultant to complete our risk management process. Why - because they have the time to dedicate to completing the myriad tasks required.

- Until agencies commit to the tool the risk sheets are pointless. It shouldn't be up to VICSES to complete the risk sheets on behalf of agencies. The risk rating is useful and voting process method is excellent. The risk table should then form the basis of EM planning in the municipality.

- The instrument needs to be validated through a rigorous scientific method so we can have confidence in the instrument.

- Need quicker turnaround time

- It would be great to have CERA available to use in small communities