



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GUIDELINE – SPONTANEOUS MEMORIALS

Lead: State Recovery Office, Department of Human Services



**Government
of South Australia**



SEMP STRUCTURE

The State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) is a four-part plan containing a range of documents that further detail strategies for dealing with emergencies in South Australia. The parts are described in more detail below.

STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

PART 1: OVERVIEW

Provides a strategic overview of the state's arrangements for senior executive and community information.

PART 2: ARRANGEMENTS

Provides the overarching details of the arrangements and structures in place to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

PART 3: GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORKS

Consists of the various guidelines and frameworks that have been developed to document known best practice for key aspects of emergency management. These guidelines and frameworks provide guidance regarding the development of arrangements, administrative functions and plans.

PART 4: PLANS

Consists of the standards required of the various levels of detailed plans for implementing the arrangements, including naming conventions, review guidance and templates. It also includes the suite of supporting plans for implementing the arrangements.

Figure 1: The South Australian State Emergency Management Plan is actually a series of documents split over 4 Parts with a number of accompanying annexes.

This Guideline is an Annexe to Part 3 of the SEMF.



CONTENTS

SEMP STRUCTURE	2
CONTENTS	3
1. AUTHORITY	4
2. AUTHORISATION	5
3. REVIEW	5
4. INTRODUCTION TO SPONTANEOUS MEMORIALS	6
4.1. DEFINITION	6
4.2. PURPOSE	6
4.3. AIM.....	6
4.4. SCOPE.....	6
5. AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE.....	7
5.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK	7
5.2. HOW A SPONTANEOUS MEMORIAL MAY BE MANAGED	8
5.2.1. Leadership	8
5.2.2. Landowner.....	8
5.2.3. Spontaneous Memorial Coordination Sub Committee (SMCSC)	8
5.3. STAKEHOLDERS	9
6. STRATEGIC DIRECTION	10
6.1. VISION	10
6.2. AIM.....	10
6.3. GOALS	10
7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES	11
GLOSSARY.....	16
ANNEX A CHECK LIST TO CONSIDER WHEN MANAGING A SPONTANEOUS MEMORIAL	17
ANNEX B PLANNING FOR SPONTANEOUS MEMORIALS.....	18



1. AUTHORITY

The Australian Constitution states that each of the states and territories is responsible for the protection of its citizens. The Australian Government has a role to assist where a state or territory is unable to meet a need or seeks assistance, but the primary role lies with the respective states/territories.

All emergency management arrangements in South Australia are governed by the *Emergency Management Act 2004* (the Act). The Act establishes the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) and lists its functions and powers.

The State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) is prepared under section 9(1) (b) of the Act to manage all emergencies. It is a function of the SEMC to prepare and keep this plan under review, and to ensure arrangements reflect best practice.

This Guideline is prepared under Part 3 of the SEMP.



2. AUTHORISATION

The Chief Executive of the Department of Human Services

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Signature

Name: Tony Harrison

Title: Chief Executive, Department of Human Services

Date 4 May 2018

3. REVIEW

Part 3 of the SEMP requires Guidelines to be reviewed and updated at least once every 2 years.

This Plan was approved on

The Plan must be reviewed and updated prior to



4. INTRODUCTION TO SPONTANEOUS MEMORIALS

4.1. DEFINITION

A spontaneous memorial is a public grieving response to the unanticipated, violent death and/or injury of a person/people :

- who were engaging in routine activities in which there is a reasonable expectation of safety
- who would not in normal circumstances be expected to die
- with whom people identify, either as someone just like them, or as a famous figure who has become important in their lives (Haney, Leimer and Lowery 1997)ⁱ

It is characterised by the donation of excessive numbers of tributes, which result in a shrine, at a site that has significance to the incident.

Spontaneous memorials assist the public to come to terms with a traumatic event. The event is likely to have had an impact on the mental health of a proportion of the population, causing fear, helplessness and griefⁱⁱ. People who have undergone previous trauma are more susceptible and they may need support to avoid long-lasting negative impacts on their lives.

There are many examples of events that have resulted in spontaneous memorials. Some recent Australian incidents prompting spontaneous memorials are:

- 2014 – The Martin Place siege in Sydney
- 2016 – The Bourke Street incident in Melbourne

4.2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the guideline is to ensure that where intervention by government in a spontaneous memorial is required, it is done in a way that will improve the support given to bereaved families, others immediately impacted (e.g. injured) and the community.

The guideline assists government agencies, non-government organisations and businesses to understand and respond appropriately to a memorial. It outlines the principles and issues that need to be considered and suggests ways to successfully engage with the memorial.

4.3. AIM

The aim of the guideline is to enable a coordinated and compassionate response to managing spontaneous memorials.

4.4. SCOPE

This guideline refers to activities that might occur during the life of a memorial. It covers the possible emotional health issues of the community, the actions that government or landowners might take and the decisions that need to be made.



5. AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

5.1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

All arrangements discussed in this document follow the laws and official plans that guide emergency management and the safety and welfare of the community.

Apart from national and state highways (managed by Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI), local government owns almost all roads in South Australia. Most spontaneous memorials are placed on, adjacent to or within view of roads. Anything in any of those places that causes a distraction, disruption or obstacle can be considered unsafe for road users. Local government is therefore an essential member of any decision making body that engages with spontaneous memorials.

As spontaneous memorials are a relatively new phenomenon in Australia, there are very few regulations that apply to any aspect of a memorial. Laws that can be applied to this activity include:

- DPTI Operational Instruction Roadside Memorials 19.15 – this instruction details activity when a roadside memorial develops. It requires that roadsides should be kept clear of any item that puts the safety of drivers or roadside users at risk. The Instruction is based on information in the Highways Act 1926.
- City of Adelaide Act 1998. This act indicates that the council has control over any activities that occur in Rundle Mall.
- Local Government Act – 208 Ownership of public roads
 - (1) All public roads in the area of council are vested in the council in fee simple under the Real Property Act 1886 – A council has authority to “remove and dispose of any structure, object or substance from a road”.
 - (2) National/State Highways do provide some variations to use and who has control of the “road”.

The State Recovery Office (SRO) has developed the Spontaneous Memorial Guideline and will review it every two years. It has been endorsed by the State Recovery Committee, which will oversee all activities.



5.2. HOW A SPONTANEOUS MEMORIAL MAY BE MANAGED

5.2.1. Leadership

Whenever a spontaneous memorial comes to the attention of the SRO the State Recovery Coordinator will be notified. The SRO will provide advice and recommendations about possible ways to manage the situation. The State Recovery Coordinator will lead the activity and the State Recovery Committee will oversee activities whenever state government works with the spontaneous memorial.

5.2.2. Landowner

The owner of the land where the memorial is located will be responsible for managing the memorial where possible. This means the landowner will be responsible for the safety and welfare of the public whilst the memorial exists and the appropriate dismantling when this is required. The landowner can seek the assistance of the SRO if needed. The SRO will decide how to best support the landowner based on the particular circumstances and the approval of the State Recovery Coordinator. The SRO and Emergency Relief Functional Support Group may provide advice and monitor what is happening or become more involved if the memorial becomes more controversial or complex. If the landowner does not seek assistance, the State Recovery Office will monitor the situation. A checklist of appropriate activities can be made available to anyone requiring this (annex A).

5.2.3. Spontaneous Memorial Coordination Sub Committee (SMCSC)

The Director of the State Recovery Office will establish this Sub Committee with the agreement of the State Recovery Coordinator and the State Recovery Committee after examining all the issues associated with a memorial.

The SMCSC will operate only for the life of a memorial and only when the memorial is causing difficulties because of:

- large size or difficult location
- impact on the general public health (e.g. rotting flowers) wellbeing issues etc.
- the complexity of the issues surrounding the memorial
- interest of the media
- interest of the Government.

The Spontaneous Memorial Coordination Sub Committee will have responsibility for:

- preparing a spontaneous memorial management plan (annex B)
- coordinating and organising any activity



- communication with the public
- decisions about dismantling the memorial
- decisions about whether or not to preserve any parts of the memorial
- organising resources needed for any activities, including dismantling and preservation, if required
- liaising with the bereaved families and others who have been immediately impacted by the incident.

5.3. STAKEHOLDERS

The following people and organisations may have an interest or an obligation in relation to a spontaneous memorial:

- the owner of the land where the memorial has been placed (may be local, state or commonwealth government, a non-government organisation, a business, or a private residence)
- families who have been bereaved and people who have been injured in the incident
- the public
- local businesses and/or residents at the site of the memorial
- the Police and Victim Support Unit of SA Police (SAPOL)
- Local government
- Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI)
- The State Recovery Office (SRO)
- The Emergency Relief Functional Support Group (ERFSG)
- any emergency management volunteer organisations involved in helping the public at the memorial site, or in assisting the dismantling process
- the Premier and members of Cabinet, depending on the gravity of the incident and the size of the memorial
- the media
- media managers from government
- other organisations, depending on the particular circumstances of the incident.

Membership of the Sub Committee is likely to be drawn from these stakeholders and from the State Recovery Committee.



6. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

6.1. VISION

Spontaneous memorials will be appropriately and positively supported, so that outcomes benefit the bereaved families and others immediately impacted by the event, and also enable expression of public grieving to assist the community in coming to terms with a traumatic incident.

6.2. AIM

The aim of the guideline is to enable a coordinated and compassionate response to supporting spontaneous memorials.

6.3. GOALS

Those interacting with spontaneous memorials are encouraged to adopt the following goals:

- Ensure that activities in relation to the memorial are coordinated and planned
- ensure that bereaved families and others immediately impacted by the incident are permitted their privacy,
- support bereaved families and other stakeholders to share in decision making if they wish to do so
- ensure the safety of the public
- ensure people know what activities will be occurring around the memorial
- offer information about ways people can seek counselling if needed
- acknowledge the needs of, and provide support to, the people who built the memorial.



7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Some principles to guide the management of spontaneous memorials (Whitton 2017ⁱⁱⁱ) are as follows:

- ✓ Be inclusive
- ✓ Be supportive
- ✓ Be respectful
- ✓ Be consultative
- ✓ Plan removal

Principle 1: BE INCLUSIVE

People build and attend spontaneous memorials because it helps healing from a traumatic incident when they are in the company of many other likeminded people. The shared experience can assist in re-establishing a sense of social balance and connections (Whitton 2016^{iv})

Practical Considerations	
Useful activities	Activities to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure safe access to the memorial is open to all ✓ Check that local businesses are able to continue to run their normal activities ✓ Allow nearby residents/businesses to tend the memorial ✓ Consider crowd management if numbers get too high ✓ Regularly inspect the site for health and safety considerations ✓ Ensure all groups of visitors are treated equally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Don't try to prevent memorialising behaviour x Don't restrict access if the location is unsafe, instead move the memorial to a safer position nearby x Don't allow the memorial to impede access and egress for local businesses x Don't allow the memorial to cause safety issues on thoroughfares around the memorial



Principle 2: BE SUPPORTIVE

Bereaved families and others immediately impacted may have mixed feelings about the memorial. Allow people the space to discuss these issues and help them to resolve their concerns. Gatherings such as these can attract people who have high needs particularly in mental health.

In the community some people may have few ways to get support and can draw on the collective nature of temporary memorials to seek what they need (Whitton 2017)^v.

Practical Considerations	
Useful activities	Activities to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make skilled practitioners available ✓ Assist bereaved families and others immediately impacted to attend the memorial with support if they wish to do so ✓ Provide information (brochures, leaflets) to assist visitors at the memorial to understand their grief and loss issues and to provide avenues for professional assistance ✓ Provide condolence books that people can sign ✓ Provide debriefing to helpers who attend the site ✓ Set up a FaceBook/Instagram page only if absolutely necessary and if able to ensure constant monitoring and removal of offensive material ✓ Remove offensive material daily from the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Don't force support on people if they do not want it x Don't ignore bereaved families and others immediately impacted by the incident. Help them to participate in decision-making if they wish to do so x Don't assume that all people who leave cards and tributes are well-wishers. There may be a need to remove offensive or disrespectful material. Failure to do so could encourage others. This activity could be undertaken by those helpers who are on site to support the visitors.



Principle 3: BE RESPECTFUL

Although some people may find the idea of a spontaneous memorial difficult to understand it is “a powerful and potentially healing experience” (Whitton 2017)^{vi}. We need to be respectful of those who attend the memorial and this respect should extend to the memorial as a whole and the tributes that have been donated.

Practical Considerations	
Useful activities	Activities to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Carry out all activities in a respectful manner ✓ Handle tributes considerately and with respect ✓ Consider people’s perceptions of what might be happening ✓ Consider the feelings of those at the site when making decisions ✓ Acknowledge any mixed feelings of bereaved families and others immediately impacted by the incident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Don’t ignore the concerns of the bereaved families and of others immediately impacted x Don’t ignore the wishes of businesses/residences nearby



Principle 4: BE CONSULTATIVE

The memorial will have strong meaning for bereaved families and others who have been immediately impacted and many will wish to contribute to the process. Not attending to those wishes could lead to “negative outcomes in future permanent memorial processes and hinder community healing” (Whitton 2017)^{vii}.

Practical Considerations	
Useful activities	Activities to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Endeavour to ensure that any activities occurring at the memorial are conveyed to those who are affected ✓ Talk to people at the memorial and discuss what they might wish to have happen at the memorial ✓ Do include the bereaved families and others immediately impacted by the incident to share in decision making if they wish to do so ✓ Be consultative about any activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Don't ignore the attendees at the memorial x Don't make decisions about the memorial without first consulting bereaved families and others immediately impacted and those who visit the memorial x Don't force consultation on people who don't want to be involved



Principle 5: PLAN REMOVAL

It is important to plan removal early. Removal of the memorial can be dependent on the weather (*Spontaneous shrines lose their emotional impact and symbolic integrity when they become soggy, windblown, and tattered.* (Sylvia Grider 2001^{viii}). It will also be dependent on the wishes of the bereaved families and others immediately impacted, the wishes of the public, or landowner plans for the site and, on the location. Early planning will allow time to canvass as many ideas as possible and provide alternative options about dismantling the memorial.

Practical Considerations	
Useful activities	Activities to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use volunteers to take a photographic history of the memorial and attendees ✓ Discuss what will happen to tributes and photographs ✓ Canvass the opinion of attendees at the memorial when starting to plan removal; some may wish to help ✓ Consider whether a memorial service can be organised when the removal happens ✓ Consider using a respected, neutral community group to remove the tributes in the memorial ✓ Make decisions about whether anything will be preserved and how this will be done ✓ Always handle tributes considerately and with respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Don't leave the decision making about removal until the last minute x Don't make unilateral decisions about what will happen to the memorial x Don't start a removal process without informing the public x Don't remove the memorial overnight so that people come back to an empty space x Don't use rubbish removal companies or bulldozers to demolish the memorial x Don't immediately agree to, or start planning a permanent memorial unless there are very important reasons for doing so



GLOSSARY

The Glossary provides definitions for terms used within this guideline that are not included in Part 2 of the SEMP. It is essential terms are used in their correct context.

DPTI	Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
ERFSG	Emergency Relief Functional Support Group
Emergency Management	A range of measures to manage risks to communities and the environment.
SAPOL	South Australian Police
Spontaneous memorial	A public memorial that arises after a traumatic event where people have died or been injured
Spontaneous Memorial Coordination Sub-Committee	The committee that operates for the life of a complex and large spontaneous memorial, and provides coordination of planning and resources. It is a subcommittee of the State Recovery Committee
Stakeholders	The people and organisations that may have an interest or an obligation in relation to the topic
State Recovery Committee	The state committee that has responsibility for coordinating recovery of communities after disasters
State Recovery Coordinator	The person who leads the planning for recovery operations prior to any emergency and manages the government recovery response to an emergency
State Recovery Office	A unit within the Department of Human Services that works across government and non-government sectors to increase the state's disaster recovery capacity and coordinates state and local recovery functions during disasters



ANNEX A Check list to consider when managing a spontaneous memorial

1. Talk to the bereaved family. They may have particular wishes about what should happen and when. If possible their wishes should be met.
2. The major thing to remember is that people are grieving. If an event has been reported widely it can impact on everyone. In particular people can feel as if the basis for their everyday lives has shifted and they are no longer safe. For some, such as those who have suffered previous trauma, this could have a lasting impact.
3. Children can find an event such as this particularly frightening. Parents and schools can be important in helping children come to terms with terror incidents.
4. If anything is being planned it should be in consultation with bereaved families, those injured by the event and with attendees at the memorial.
5. It may be useful to alert local mental health or counselling services about the need for assistance to attendees.
6. Seek advice from the professionals above if concerned about the mental health of particular attendees. They will be able to provide you with leaflets and brochures that can assist a grieving process.
7. The dismantling process needs to be considered carefully:
 - a) Does the family want to do it or be involved?
 - b) Who else should be involved? Choose volunteers who are neutral and well respected.
 - c) Always treat the tributes with consideration and respect. Don't use rubbish trucks or bulldozers to dismantle the memorial
8. At some previous memorials the dismantling process was turned into a memorial service for the deceased person/s. Ask whether this would be useful.
9. Flowers can be sent to a local hospital or home for the aged or they can be mulched and used on a special garden. The family may have some wishes about this.
10. Cards, vases or similar can be:
 - a) Given to the family
 - b) Photographed and digitalised and placed into a memorial book with a copy to the bereaved and injured, and a copy for the library so that people can see it later.



ANNEX B PLANNING FOR SPONTANEOUS MEMORIALS

The questions in the activity column are prompts only. The level of governance, planning and management will need to be determined by the type and location of the event and memorial.

Activity	Plan	Who
Context What are the key presenting issues?		
Governance Confirm the chair and who will report to SRC Is there anyone else who needs to be on the sub-committee? How often does the sub-committee meet? Who is recording minutes? Who will write the final report?		
Landowner Who owns the land? Can the owner manage the situation without assistance? What assistance might the landowner need?		
Bereaved families and people injured in the event Who will make contact and keep these people updated? Are there different views that need different strategies?		
Stakeholders Are there other stakeholders who need to be engaged due to the nature of the event? Who will do this?		
Safety considerations If the memorial is sited on, adjacent to or in view		



<p>of a road, is it a hazard to traffic? Are there other hazards to be considered? How will these be addressed?</p>		
<p>Site maintenance Who will check health and safety issues to keep the public safe? Who will keep the memorial tidy? Is security needed?</p>		
<p>Support to be offered Are there distressed people attending the memorial? Who is best able to care for the people? How will this be managed? How will volunteers be assisted throughout the event?</p>		
<p>Resources What will be needed and who will provide it? e.g. condolence books, leaflets, brochures. Will a photographic record be kept? Who will do this?</p>		
<p>Communication How will communication be handled? At the site and across the community?</p>		
<p>Consultation plan Who will be responsible for consulting the attendees on preservation issues? How will this be done? What will be recorded? Where?</p>		
<p>Dismantling and removal Will memorial services be required? How will this be organised?</p>		



<p>Who will provide these? How will the dismantling be undertaken? Who will do the work?</p>		
<p>Preservation plan Does anything need to be preserved? Who will do this?</p>		
<p>Debriefing Who will do the debriefing of those who worked at the site? Who will debrief the committee?</p>		



REFERENCES

ⁱ Haney, C.A., Leimer, C. & Lowery, J. (1997). Spontaneous memorialization: Violent death and emerging mourning ritual. *Omega*, 35, 159-171.

ⁱⁱ Shona Whitten Churchill Fellow, “Exploring the role of memorialising in disaster recovery” The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia, Canberra Australia, October 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Shona Whittton (November 2017) “Psychosocial guidelines for temporary memorial management”.

Available at: <https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/9569a682-8867-438f-be1b-331b6e79a314/2017-Psychosocial-guidelines-for-temporary-memorial-management.pdf.aspx> or can be accessed via this page <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters/help-for-agencies>

^{iv} Shona Whitten Churchill Fellow “Exploring the role of memorialising in disaster recovery” The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia, Canberra Australia, October 2016

^v Shona Whittton (November 2017) “Psychosocial guidelines for temporary memorial management”.

^{vi} Ibid

^{vii} Ibid

^{viii} Ibid

^{vii} [Sylvia Grider](#) Department of Anthropology, Texas A&M University. “Spontaneous Shrines: A Modern Response to Tragedy and Disaster (Preliminary Observations Regarding the Spontaneous Shrines Following the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001”.



1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

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