

CATEGORY

Disaster and Emergency Services

Department of Transport (Regional Roads Victoria)

Golden Ball Bridge - North East Victoria

Rethinking our traditional approach to public participation during recovery, the **Golden Ball Bridge Disaster Recovery Project** (<https://youtu.be/svCn-j4RfFk>), presented us with an opportunity to facilitate community influence in the Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) recovery-decision making process.

Golden Ball Bridge, is located along a key Victorian tourism, freight, commuter and bus route for the Beechworth community and Indigo Shire, supporting local assets: internationally renowned food and wine; local tourism operators; restaurants; primary producers; micro-breweries and the significant Murray to Mountains Rail Trail.

The massive overland flooding event of December 13, 2018 devastated residential and business sites, ceased day to day activities and community connections, while damaging significant road infrastructure, including the Golden Ball Bridge, on the Beechworth-Wangaratta Road.

With our traditional approach in hand, we intended to **inform** the community of the damage, the required lengthy closure while the bridge was repaired, and provide them with the detour information. We soon abandoned our traditional approach after community recovery meetings revealed they needed the road and bridge open as soon as possible, for their social and economic survival. This was a huge change for the Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) decision-makers, which required adapting their processes to allow for a community-centred approach. We advocated internally and increased public participation to **collaborate** including **involve, consult and inform** to better understand how we could support a resilient recovery.

With major challenges along the way and a community that expected urgent action, we (RRV) were in uncharted territory. Our engagement plan, embedded with the IAP2 core values, deliberately sought public participation through five project objectives, focussing our work on our circle of influence. Designed to challenge the status quo of a traditional approach but also provide our RRV Project Delivery team comfort that we would be sticking to our remit and not impede delivery times. We shaped a successful engagement plan and found an innovative treatment - a temporary bridge structure called a Bailey bridge. This provided comfort to our RRV decision-makers that our public participation was considered, controlled, manageable, achievable and 'the right thing to do' - a sustainable decision for all involved.

By doing the right thing and being a passionate engagement team, we genuinely engaged with a highly impacted community, that needed our advocacy to influence the RRV decision-making process. Delivering better outcomes for all and building community resilience through recovery – a 'win-win' situation for all.

We're enthusiastic players in the engagement process because it's amazing what great ideas we harness from the feedback that constantly influences our decision-making. It compels us to be adaptive, flexible and to innovate. The Golden Ball Bridge project has left a lasting impact on our organisation. The innovative Bailey bridge challenged the status quo of RRVs engineering approaches and has since been used on other RRV projects. Our RRV Engagement team is proud to now be an ongoing facilitator in post emergency resilience, helping to shape a new community-centred road to recovery.