

GO PACK! THE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS BAG FOR NDIS PARTICIPANTS IN THE LMPHU MURRAY SUB-REGION

Rationale

(Campaspe Shire - Phase 1 rollout)

People with disability experience greater risks to their safety and health during emergencies and natural disasters compared to the general population. In fact, they are two to four times more likely to die or sustain injuries during disaster events.

The risk is particularly pronounced for people living in regional and rural areas, where a greater proportion of individuals with disability reside compared to major Australian cities.

The Loddon Mallee region was severely affected by the 2022 floods. This meant many residents' homes were inundated with water and had to evacuate. The lived experience of community disability organisations during the flood events identified that many people with a disability living independently in community were not prepared for evacuation of their homes. Project partners advocated that communication for people living with disability requires consideration of unique and inclusive needs.

A 2016 Climate Council report, *On the Frontline: Climate Change & Rural Communities*, highlighted that extreme weather events disproportionately impact people living in rural areas, leading to significant social, health and economic consequences. Within the LMPHU Murray sub-region, covering the shires of Campaspe, Buloke, Swan Hill and Gannawarra, there are approximately 2,000 National Disability Insurance Scheme participants, representing around 2.75% of the local population. This proportion emphasises the heightened vulnerability of these communities to climate-related events.



At a Glance

Through a co-design process, project partners Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU), Campaspe Shire, Vivid and Community Living & Respite Services, developed Go Pack!, a bright green two-litre drawstring “back sack”. It is designed by NDIS participants to help them and their support workers/family, prepare and pack for emergency situations like flood, fire, storms, extreme heat. ‘It’s not just about the bag and what’s inside, it’s about the conversation it sparks.’

With increased extreme weather events predicted in coming years, it is vital for health, community and emergency service agencies to assist regional and rural people with disability to prepare.

Go Pack! bags are being distributed to 2,000 NDIS participants in the LMPHU Murray sub-region in early 2026.

The first phase roll-out, funded by the Loddon Mallee Health Unit and will include a check-list fridge magnet, social script and preparedness support guides.

Intervention

LMPHU engaged 20 participants (and their carers / support people) from Vivid and CLRS (Echuca) to design Go Pack! an emergency preparedness bag. Complementing Campaspe Shire's emergency planning including the First 72 hours framework, participants were engaged in a co-design process. This occurred through a face-to-face facilitated workshop and survey feedback.

During the workshop, participants shared their lived experience of the 2022 floods. They described how it made them feel scared and confused. They identified important items they might pack "next time".

People with disability, particularly those with lower levels of literacy, have different communication needs. For example, requiring communications in Easy English and images / icons that connote meaning.

Go Pack! is designed to complement the emergency planning and preparedness work undertaken by Local Government Authorities and larger agencies including VICSES and Red Cross Australia. It is also aligned with the Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness Framework (Plan).

Participants reached consensus on design needs:

- "The bag should be green, as the green traffic light means "go"
- "The bag should be called "Go Pack" because "that tells us what we need to do"
- Which icons were easy to understand, and which weren't. For example, packaged food is easier to understand when linked with a muesli bar icon.

Importantly, participants told us which items were vital to pack. These are listed in descending order (columns) on the back of the bag.

Go Pack is accompanied by an social script, A5 fridge magnet which features important items to pack, together with the First 72 hours brochure and a USB card. The card can hold copies of essential documents such as a care plan, personal identification, insurance policies etc.

Go Pack! is co-funded through Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (2024/2025) and supporting Councils. Campaspe Shire provided funding for the fridge magnets, USB cards and First 72 hours emergency planning template and brochure.

Feedback from Vivid participant Josh Cheep on the co-design process and assisting with packing the bags:

"For me, it's the best thing I ever did. I live near the Campaspe River, and I actually got to see the floods a couple of years ago. For people with disabilities like myself, I like this bag because it's very visual, and they've got pictures of what goes in".



Vivid Echuca participants with Go Pack! bag

Next steps

On 27 November 2025 a 'packing day' was held onsite at Vivid and CLRS. NDIS participants and staff members from these organisations, plus LMPHU, Campaspe Shire and Intereach packed 1,000 bags for the first stage rollout in Campaspe Shire.

Distribution of the bags commenced in January and February 2026. Distribution of bags across the Gannawarra, Swan Hill and Buloke LGAs has also commenced. This is being coordinated by the community disability organisations for residential and program participants. Additionally, the Local Area Coordinator - Intereach are supporting the distribution of the GoPacks by ensuring all NDIS participants are provided a bag with their annual plan reviews.

Evaluation of the project will occur in 2026.

Broader application & Scalability

- VICSES suggest inclusion of a one-page document that advises trusted media sources, Vic Emergency and Emergency+apps, translation services and local radio stations
- Workshops to assist NDIS participants to embed emergency preparation in their lives.
- Expanding the project across all LMPHU LGAs

Resource links

- [GoPack scalability](#)
- [GoPack social script](#)



Vivid participants and staff with Go Pack! Emergency preparedness bag



GoPack A5 checklist and Social script