

Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2026

Abstract submission guidelines

Thank you for your interest in submitting an abstract for the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2026. We greatly value the innovative ideas and insights that you bring, which contribute to the success of this event. Abstract submissions for the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2026 are open to disaster risk reduction practitioners, volunteers, researchers and academics, industry, community and all levels of government. To facilitate a smooth and efficient submission process, we kindly ask that you review the submission guidelines carefully before proceeding. Adhering to these instructions will help ensure that your abstract receives the attention it deserves during the review process. Should you have any questions or require assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out. We look forward to receiving your submissions.

Theme

Mindset matters: practical pathways to equitable resilience

Resilience starts with how we think- our mindset shapes the choices we make as individuals, communities, and organisations. Disasters are not simply the result of natural events; they occur when hazards intersect with people and places. The ways we live, build, and prepare can turn hazards into disasters, or help us avoid them. Shifting our mindset from inevitability to responsibility is the first step in reducing risk and building just resilience.

At ADRC26, we invite you to reimagine resilience through both mindset and action. This year's theme is about looking ahead, challenging us to move beyond focusing only on hazards, and instead examine the deeper, systemic causes of risk, such as inequity, exclusion, and the far-reaching impacts of our decisions in an increasingly uncertain world.

We welcome everyone: community groups, volunteers, academics, emergency management professionals, governments, and those from health, education, business, and creative sectors to question assumptions, share new perspectives, and challenge the status quo in our practices and organisations. The conference is shaped by the experiences and insights of the diversity of our population. By centring a diversity of lived experiences, we aim to co-create pathways that are inclusive, equitable, and transformative for all.

Together, we'll explore:

- What mindsets do we need across policy, practice, and partnerships to lead with empathy, equity, and courage?
- What does it mean to truly centre communities in resilience planning?
- How can we shift from reactive responses to proactive, collaborative strategies?

This is not just a theoretical conversation. We seek real-world examples and rigorous research that demonstrate mindset shifts in action: policies co-designed with communities, partnerships that share power, and programs that embed wellbeing and justice. Bring your case studies, tools, and honest lessons so others can learn and adapt.

Let's question, share, and co-create futures, and a mindset, where resilience is inclusive, connected, and transformative.

Recommended reading:

- For more on how our choices shape disasters and resilience, see: Kelman, I. (2020). *Disaster by choice: How our actions turn natural hazards into catastrophes*. Oxford University Press.
- You might also find this Conversation article, which relates to our focus on mindset, practical action, and learning from experience, interesting:
<https://theconversation.com/we-rarely-hear-about-the-disasters-that-were-avoided-but-theres-a-lot-we-can-learn-from-them-217850> share

Sub-themes

How to use the sub-themes

These sub-themes are submission pathways, not checkboxes. Choose the pathway that best fits your work. Each pathway includes a purpose explanation, and what good submissions include, to keep contributions practical and transferable.

1) Local Government and community partnerships for resilience

Purpose: Resilience is built locally. This pathway spotlights shared decision-making between councils, local agencies (e.g. neighbourhood houses, community services) and community groups. Emphasis on how local government enables and resources community-led approaches: policy settings, governance, delegated decision rights, funding lines, procurement and data access that favour community benefit.

What good submissions include:

- Clear council roles (policy levers, resourcing, procurement preferences) and how these enabled co-design and co-delivery
- Governance shifts: MOUs, joint committees, participatory budgeting, delegated authorities

- Demonstrable community benefits (qualitative stories + metrics) and how equity was addressed
- Transferable artefacts: playbooks, templates, facilitation scripts, consent/process forms
- Lessons learned (including missteps) and what would be done differently next time

2) Leadership and mindsets in practice

Purpose: Show transformative, emotionally intelligent leadership that changes everyday decisions and culture. Focus on the mindsets you surfaced and shifted (e.g. short-term cycle; “DRR is someone else’s job”; unequal power) and how you built psychological safety and shared power across partners.

What good submissions include:

- The decisions and trade-offs actually made (with rationale and constraints)
- How resistance was anticipated/handled; mechanisms for accountability and transparency
- Artefacts that others can adopt (leadership charters, decision rules, “red team” reviews, After-Action Reviews)
- Outcome signals: practice change, risk indicators, team wellbeing signals
- A frank reflection section: what didn’t work and the adjustment you made.

3) Equity, justice, and root causes of risk and consequence

Purpose: True resilience means tackling the root causes of vulnerability- structural inequities in housing, health, finance, disability inclusion, age, sexuality, income, gender, and justice. This pathway is for work that makes inequities visible and changeable, whether through policy reform, community advocacy, or new governance models. Submissions should show how diverse communities (including First Nations, CALD, disability, youth, rural/remote, and others) have been centred in the process and how outcomes have been measured and sustained.

What good submissions include:

- The structural driver/s of risk you tackled; who was affected
- Policy/program changes and power-sharing mechanisms
- Equity metrics (or qualitative outcomes) showing reduced risk/improved access
- Funding/governance shifts that locked in fairness
- Reusable tools (equity assessment, inclusive procurement/checklists)

4) Partnerships that shift systems

Purpose: To highlight cross-sector collaborations that move beyond individual projects to drive meaningful policy and system change. This pathway is about building strong, enduring partnerships

across government, community, business, and other sectors that break down silos and create the conditions for resilience to become embedded at every level. We invite stories and strategies that show how genuine collaboration can influence policy, transform systems, and address root causes, unlocking new ways of working and scaling impact for lasting resilience.

What good submissions include:

- Roles and governance structures that enabled collaboration
- Funding models and mechanisms that supported scale
- Honest reflections on failures and adaptations
- Examples of policy or system change resulting from partnership
- Artefacts: partnership agreements, governance frameworks, funding templates.

5) Psychosocial resilience and wellbeing

Purpose: Psychosocial resilience is a core part of disaster risk reduction and community strength, not an afterthought or a recovery-only concern. This pathway focuses on how individuals, teams, organisations, and communities build and sustain psychosocial wellbeing before, during, and after disasters. It welcomes trauma-informed design, peer support, reflective practice, and strategies that embed psychosocial care into everyday resilience work, including for the emergency management workforce.

What good submissions include:

- Practical approaches to psychosocial preparedness and wellbeing (not just post-disaster recovery)
- Trauma-informed design in planning, training, and operations
- Peer support, supervision, and reflective practice embedded in teams
- Community-led psychosocial initiatives that build ongoing resilience
- Evaluation of psychosocial outcomes and lessons learned.

6) Practice exchange: tools, techniques, and trials

Purpose: Share practical “how-to” resources others can take home and use. This pathway is for toolkits, checklists, data workflows, training designs, and evaluation results that are ready to be adapted and applied.

What good submissions include:

- Toolkits, checklists, training designs, data workflows
- Evaluation results and evidence of effectiveness
- Licensing or sharing terms so others can reuse/adapt
- Clear prerequisites (skills, data, partners) and pitfalls to avoid
- Artefacts: downloadable resources, guides, templates

7) Creativity and culture for resilience

Purpose: Arts, storytelling, media, and culture are powerful catalysts for shifting mindsets and building resilience. This pathway invites submissions that use creative approaches, such as participatory arts, digital storytelling, theatre, music, exhibitions, and cultural projects to engage communities, spark dialogue, and inspire new ways of thinking about disaster risk reduction. The goal is to showcase how creative practice can foster inclusion, amplify diverse, and help people imagine and co-create resilient futures.

What good submissions include:

- Methods and facilitation scripts for creative engagement (e.g. workshops, performances, story circles, media labs, participatory research methods)
- Evidence of impact: how creative approaches led to increased awareness, changed attitudes, or strengthened community connections
- Licensing or sharing terms so others can reuse/adapt the approach
- Co-creation with communities, including lived experience and culturally diverse participants
- Reflections on challenges, ethical considerations, and lessons learned.

Special session: Lightning stories (10-minute storytelling)

Mindset journeys: Accidental resilience advocates

- **Purpose:** celebrate/highlight people who didn't start in DRR but became powerful changemakers, and explore the pathways that they have taken.
- **Good submissions:** short, story-driven lightning talks with "what changed" and "what others can replicate."

This will be a curated set of short, story-driven lightning talks from people who didn't start in DRR but became powerful resilience advocates through lived experience, community work, policy moments, unexpected career pivots, or creative practice. This series will humanise the theme, showing how mindsets change in real life, and what others can copy tomorrow.

Objectives: By the end of the session, participants will:

- i) See diverse pathways into resilience work (community, government, industry, NGOs, arts, youth, First Nations, disability, multicultural, rural/remote)
- ii) Learn 2-3 replicable moves (tools, decisions, partnerships) per story that shift mindsets and reduce risk
- iii) Commit to one concrete action they'll trial in the next 30 days (captured via quick audience prompt)

Abstract submission types

All presentations must adhere to the subject matter and presenters as outlined in the abstract submitted.

Oral presentation	An oral presentation is a verbal presentation by 1 to 3 presenters. PowerPoint slides may be used. Presenters will present the content as outlined in their abstract. Names of all presenters must be provided in the abstract at the time of submission.
Panel presentation	A panel presentation is a verbal presentation and/or discussion by 3 or more presenters. Names of the panellists must be provided in the abstract. Presenters will generally be seated in a more casual seating arrangement on the stage to facilitate a more informal conversation.
Poster	Posters are a summary of the presenter's research or project content and findings and are displayed in the Knowledge Centre in the Exhibition Hall near the AIDR stand and Resilience Lane. Please note that abstracts for other presentation types that are not selected may be offered the opportunity to be presented as a poster.
Lightning storytelling session	This special session features short, story-driven lightning talks (10 minutes each) from individuals who became resilience advocates through lived experience, community work, policy moments, unexpected career pivots, or creative practice often outside traditional disaster risk reduction (DRR) pathways. The purpose is to celebrate and highlight people who didn't start in DRR but became powerful changemakers, exploring the unique journeys and practical lessons that shaped their impact. Good submissions for this session are concise, personal stories that focus on "what changed" for the storyteller and "what others can replicate." Presenters should share pivotal moments, tools, decisions, or partnerships that shifted their mindset and contributed to resilience, making it clear how these lessons can be applied by others.

Selection criteria

Abstracts need to meet the following criteria to be eligible for consideration:

- Applicants may submit a maximum of one abstract per submission type (see above for description of submission types). Abstracts over this limit will not be assessed.
- Abstracts may be referred by AIDR to the AFAC26 Program Committee if the abstract is more closely aligned with the AFAC26 conference theme.
- Abstracts should clearly outline how they reflect the conference theme.
- Abstracts should demonstrate how the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference delegates will benefit from the presentation.
- For panel presentations, the names of all proposed panel members must be included in the submission.

Assessment criteria

The Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2026 Program Committee (the Committee) will assess the abstracts against the following criteria:

- Clearly defined purpose
- Engages with the theme, and selected subtheme
- Demonstrates brave and innovative thinking
- Encourages and empowers transformation in policy, practice, partnerships, or community outcomes
- Inspires action and change
- Provides practical impact and transferability.

Key documents and frameworks

We welcome consideration of, and reference to, key Australian and global disaster risk reduction documents, including:

- [National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework](#)
- [Second National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction](#)
- [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#)

The [Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub](#) houses a comprehensive collection of international, national and state documents that frame disaster resilience.

Key dates

Thursday 27 November 2025	Submissions open Applicants are invited to submit an abstract using this portal. Their abstract can be a personal submission, a submission on behalf of a colleague, or a submission on behalf of their organisation. Abstracts must address the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2026 theme.
Monday 2 February 2026	Submissions close at 11pm AEDT Submissions must be lodged on the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2026 abstract portal.
Thursday 26 March 2026	Selection process finalised Shortlisted abstracts will be selected by the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2025 Program Committee, and endorsed by the Steering Committee by Thursday 26 March 2026. Selected submissions will be made a formal offer as soon as possible following endorsement by the Steering Committee. Applicants whose submissions were not selected may be offered the opportunity to display their work as a poster in the Knowledge Centre. Please note that all decisions made by the Program Committee are final.
Thursday 9 April 2026	Applicants accept offer Following their acceptance of their offer, speakers agree to register to attend the conference.
Friday 12 June 2026	Presenters provide high resolution photo and 200-word bio to info@afaconference.com.au .
Monday 3 August 2026	Presenters provide their oral presentation (if applicable) including accompanying PowerPoint slides. An event template will be provided to presenters.

Enquiries

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