

Australian Disaster Resilience  
Conference 2019

# Abstracts

connection · empowerment · respect · wisdom

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# Does saying we're resilient make it so?

## The Cairns Resilience Scorecard Project

**Ms Sioux Campbell**

**Cairns Regional Council**

**Presented at the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

Across the nation resilience has become a buzzword. At the very mention of an adverse event resilience is associated, generally referring to the practical response actions undertaken by affected communities. But what does resilience actually look like - and does simply saying a community is resilient make it so?

As one of just six Australian cities and the only Australian role model city signed up with the UNISDR Resilient Cities campaign, Cairns takes a pro-active, strategically planned approach to disaster resilience building. Realistically measuring resilience is an ongoing challenge, particularly in regions such as Cairns where the absence of a major disaster for many years breeds complacency and urban myth.

In 2014, two years after its community resilience programme began, the Cairns Regional Council's disaster management unit implemented a comprehensive stocktake of the state of resilience at social and infrastructural levels. An assessment of two resilience scorecard methods was undertaken and the decision made to use both, to provide a more complete baseline understanding of resilience in the region. Aiming concurrently to build empowerment of the many communities involved in building resilience, the UNISDR and Torrens Institute scorecards were completed using a participatory approach which incorporated community research and mapping and directly engaged community members, groups and organisations, disaster management agencies and individuals. Methods included self assessments, surveys, focus groups, workshops, discussions at community events and one-one interviews, with the information gained shared collaboratively.

As a result, those involved have reported a much deeper understanding of the importance of holistic resilience and their role in maintaining and developing it into the future. Gaps which were identified continue to be integrated into resilience building projects, with the scorecard due for reassessment in 2020. The programme won IAP2's 2018 Australasian Core Value awards for Disaster and Emergency Services.

# Empowering resilient businesses to drive thriving communities

**Ms Renae Hanvin**

**corporate2community**

**Presented at the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

The 'business' stakeholder group (aka private sector) is regularly acknowledged under shared responsibility, yet is minimally understood and rarely engaged to actively play a proactive role. Why?

Australian businesses, from small to large, are in no way prepared for our future era of natural or human-induced disasters.

Yet as the economic backbone of Australian communities we need all businesses, not just those providing critical infrastructure needs, to be ready from an organisational resilience and community resilient lens – to bounce back better when disruption occurs.

This requires all business-types within the private sector to be educated, connected and motivated on the importance of integrating a disaster resilience mindset into their business-as-usual operations.

With evidence clearly showing existing disaster response approaches are not equipped to handle the predictions of our future, it's time traditional stakeholders within the emergency management sector acknowledge and support 'good practice' shared value private sector contribution.

Businesses are integrated into our communities, and to be ready for the predicted glass half empty future ahead we need to think different and start building trust and co-operative outcomes in conjunction with all categories of the private sector.

In this presentation, Renae will showcase local and international examples of why businesses should be embraced instead of being treated like a token player in the emergency management and disaster landscape. Renae will challenge attendees on why they need to think different and do different when it comes to including private sector participation in building a future of disaster resilient communities.

# Building resilience through regional collaboration and partnerships

**Mr Brendan Moon**

**Queensland Reconstruction Authority**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

The increased frequency and severity of disasters caused by our changing climate is creating an uncertain future, making it necessary to prepare communities for the unprecedented. Being 'future ready' requires us to find innovative ways for disaster resilience to be embedded into daily life as part of business-as-usual, rather than a separate action for disaster managers.

Regional collaboration and partnerships are key strategies being undertaken by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) to strengthen community resilience now and into the future. The QRA is partnering with local governments to develop regional resilience strategies through a process that is state facilitated and locally led. The Burnett Catchment Flood Resilience Strategy was the first pilot project delivered in 2017, with a further three pilots now underway to overcome a range of issues including multi-hazards and persistent drought.

The strategies are informed through a co-design process that respects local knowledge and wisdom, and empowers local leadership to determine key priorities for each region. The strategies focus on connecting people across government boundaries and professional disciplines as a means of identifying shared solutions to common problems that can be implemented over time.

In 2016, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority undertook extensive consultation with local governments throughout Queensland to hear the challenges they face in managing flood risk. Key challenges raised include risk intelligence, community resilience, land-use planning and building controls, environmental management and disaster management. This work was the catalyst for a new delivery model for increasing disaster resilience at the local level as demonstrated through the regional resilience strategy pilot projects.

# A recovery approach – drawing out the strengths within the community

**Miss Sharna Whitehand, Mr Jarrod Woff**

**Corangamite Shire Council**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

The South West Complex fires left our community overcome and unsure how to move forward. The Corangamite Shire Fire Recovery Team have worked through a community led and case management recovery process to bring out our community strengths and provide linkages to support services.

Our community is connected, supportive, humble and resourceful. How did we draw on these strengths? Knowing the community, respecting their systems, supporting and encouraging them to help each other, building strong networks to the support services and simplifying bureaucratic processes across the government agencies involved in this recovery.

We plan to present a 10-minute video of our community members experience and present the recovery process we have implemented, alongside the challenges and solutions we implemented. The recovery has focused on the directly impacted residents from across the three fires, Camperdown, Terang-Cobden and Garvoc which commenced on March 17 2018 and continued for 53 days until the final peat fires at Cobrico and Lake Elingamite were declared safe on Tuesday 8 May. The impacts included more than 10,000 hectares burnt, killing 2000 head of livestock and destroying 25 homes, 61 sheds, extensive fencing and feed. The recovery also comprises the struggles presented by the small businesses of these townships and the complications of the peat fires around the lakes. The council team of four have actively worked with a base of 180 cases.

We feel this recovery has been a success, while we continue to learn and evolve throughout the recovery process, we believe we have some key messages to share with the sector as the sector explores the next phase of recovery within the before, during and after framework.

# How can government support community-led approaches in recovery?

**Ms Louise Mitchell**

**Social Recovery Reference Group**

**Ms Carol Owen**

**Department of Health Tasmania**

**Ms Andrea Spiteri**

**Department of Health and Human Services Victoria**

**Ange Gordon**

**Community member and La Trobe Health Assembly member**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

Community recovery after disaster is essentially a shared endeavour in Australia, with community members, government and community-based organisations and NGO partners involved. Researchers have examined the notion of sharing responsibility for the risk to life and property from disasters in working to prepare and respond to disasters. More recently the national Social Recovery Reference Group (SRRG) has examined this in light of the risks to community sustainability and the part recovery plays.

How do we manage the risks to: an individual being able to live a life they value; a community's sense of safety, health, wellbeing and trust; and a community having a sense of self-efficacy? The practices government employs to support community-led recovery approaches and sharing responsibility require connection to local place-based communities and the organisations servicing them incorporating collaborative and deliberative approaches.

This presentation will consist of a panel bringing together thought leaders in the field of recovery to discuss how connection to self and others, within organisations, between them and with communities is paramount to successful community recovery. It will draw on the recent work of the SRRG exploring the question: how can government best support community-led approaches in recovery while maintaining coordination?

The panel will consist of Carole Owen, Department of Health Tasmania, Andrea Spiteri, Department of Health and Human Services Victoria, Ange Gordon, Community member and La Trobe Health Assembly member, Gippsland, with Louise Mitchell facilitating the discussion.

# Respect and recovery – state and local government working together with communities

**Ms Wendy Graham**

**NSW Office of Emergency Management**

**Ms Anne Leadbeater**

**Leadbeater Group**

**Ms Leanne Barnes**

**Bega Valley Shire Council**

**Mr Euan Ferguson**

**Recovery Coordinator**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

Councils are the lynchpin in local communities; when a disaster happens they know how the impacts will be felt and they know their community's concerns and priorities. Respecting and harnessing this knowledge are fundamental to successful recovery. The NSW Office of Emergency Management Recovery Coordination Team deploys to disaster affected areas, working alongside the local council and community, providing support and guidance to the recovery effort. This partnership is successful when it is based on mutual trust and respect and an honouring of local leadership and knowledge. Local council brings knowledge and expertise in community while the State Recovery Team brings its knowledge and expertise in recovery.

Facilitated by Anne Leadbeater OAM, this panel session brings together key players from the Tathra and district bush fire recovery: Bega Valley Shire Council General Manager Leanne Barnes, Recovery Coordinator Euan Ferguson and NSW Deputy State Recovery Controller Wendy Graham. They will share how local and state government are working respectfully and collaboratively together to drive effective recovery in disaster affected communities.

The panel will share some of the successes and challenges experienced in the Tathra and district recovery, along with a group question time facilitated by Anne Leadbeater. The panel will discuss the following:

- What examples of connection between diverse actors are leading the way?
- Which resilience initiatives show the power of respect and trust with diverse communities?
- What empowers people to act on disaster resilience? What disempowers them?
- How can we harness the wisdom of lived experience to prepare for the future?

# Taking preparedness action to scale

**Ms Jacqui Pringle**

**Australian Red Cross**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

We all know that getting someone to think about, place value in and then take action to prepare themselves for an outcome that is often not immediate or guaranteed, is hard. How about getting three million people across Australia to think about, place value in and then take action to prepare themselves for an emergency, within a five-year timeframe? That's the challenge that has faced Red Cross since 2015 when an organisational strategy reset delivered a new outcome to its domestic emergency services program: three million Australians are equipped to prepare for and recover from a disaster by 2020.

Over the past four years the organisation has reviewed its existing disaster preparedness activities and has collaborated internally and externally to explore alternative activities, tools, processes and outcomes in order to better understand what works and what doesn't work in terms of scaling preparedness action. We've experimented with different types of technology and ways of working by applying agile and human-centred design principles. We've learned:

- That we need to understand humans – their behaviours, attitudes and beliefs
- That we need to understand what motivates people to take sustained action - the moments that matter to them. And that these will be very different depending upon the person because context is everything.
- That we need to work differently and better develop our capacity to rapidly experiment and test hypotheses and gather evidence to help us define where we go next.
- The importance of partnership and collaboration

But mostly we've learned that it's complicated. This paper will outline the journey that Red Cross has gone on move towards a different way of conceptualising and engaging with communities at risk.

# REFUGE 2019: Displacement

**Ms Sarah Rowbottam**

**Arts House**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

Arts House is an advocate for the role artists play in imagining new futures for our city, and where civic responsibility and the arts collide. These questions permeate our program and are examined closely in REFUGE: a five-year project focused on community preparedness for climate change disasters.

REFUGE sees artists, elders, emergency services, academics and scientists participate in ongoing research and collaboration. The result is two weekends of new art, talks, workshops, dinners and parties that share the result of this research and offer a new perspective. Crucially, these experiences are co-designed by people who might not normally collaborate in a crisis. To this end, REFUGE's strength is found in a broad set of partnerships including Emergency Management Victoria, State Emergency Services, Red Cross, Resilient Melbourne, University of Melbourne, North Melbourne Language and Learning, and others.

The fourth year of REFUGE leaps into the foreseeable future to consider displacement of peoples from across our region prompted by climate change crisis, and to address our own histories of displacement. How do we care for the newly vulnerable arriving on our shores? How can we take the lead from Traditional Owners and First Nations people when imagining new approaches? What can civic spaces like the Arts House offer? When resources are limited, how do we share? REFUGE 2019 creates space for a multitude of voices and proposes new ways to embed equity, access, dignity and justice in our response to catastrophe through a creative approach.

2020 is the final year of REFUGE. It is the culmination of five years of research into community preparedness for climate change disasters. The REFUGE model - research, art, community and action – will be shared through an international conference, publication and a retrospective of the past four years of artist's works, alongside new commissions.

# Arts and culture – sustaining people and place in a changing world

**Ms Scotia Monkivitch**

**The Creative Recovery Network**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

Life is full of surprises, twists and turns that trip us up or enable growth and new opportunity. Our response to these challenges, as individuals and communities, is as varied as the context in which they occur. And you can be sure that the context is complex and forever changing. The challenge of knowing and growing resilience is a vital task of future thinking.

Since the earliest times of recorded history there is evidence of the power of sharing stories through word, music, image and dance. Through story we have formed emotional and political connections, shared experiences, warned of danger and shared the management of interconnected social-ecological systems.

The arts support us to share the unspeakable, process our experiences and plan for the future. Creativity finds solutions to what is seen to be impossible and opens new perspectives in the face of new challenges.

The Creative Recovery Network works to harness the creative thinking and skills of artists and the arts sector. The arts bring adaptive skills, diverse experience and unlimited potential for influencing the way we work with and in preparedness, response and recovery. Supporting the arts means sharing and celebrating individual and collective wisdom, beliefs and values, and healing through connectedness and understanding. We see pursuing true participation and collaboration at large as the only path to shared and sustainable outcomes.

Through our network we work together to create and achieve locally owned visions and goals, putting local voices in the lead, building on local strengths and collaborating across sectors. This relationship focus is intentional and adaptable and works to achieve systemic change focused on self-determination and resilience building.

# Empowering disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction through cross- sector leadership

**Dr Michelle Villeneuve**

University of Sydney

**Mandy Moore**

NSW Office of Emergency Management

Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.

People with disabilities (PWD) are excluded from commonly used community engagement methods designed to increase individual self-reliance in disaster. This perpetuates inequity and increases vulnerability because their support needs in emergency situations are not understood. In Australia, vulnerability is further increased because it is not clear whose responsibility it is to address the unique needs of PWD in disasters.

This paper shares the process and outcomes of a five-year cross-sector collaborative partnership in NSW that combined practice wisdom and research evidence from the emergency services, community health and disability sectors. Our collaboration targeted inclusive community engagement to increase the resilience of PWD to disaster.

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) depends on effective cross-sector collaboration between emergency managers and community services personnel to remove barriers that stop PWD engaging with DRR activities through principles of accessibility, participation, collaboration and non-discrimination. Together, we have expanded networks of connections that have enabled us to:

- co-design policy guidelines and practice tools
- develop community capacity for DIDRR.

Our work demonstrates that PWD and local community health and disability personnel that support them are ready and willing to be involved in DIRR. We will discuss both facilitators and challenges to enabling DIDRR through cross-sector leadership.

Strengths-based tools and processes contribute to the development of legitimate roles for community providers who have not traditionally been included in disaster risk management. Tools that enable PWD to self-assess their functional capabilities and support needs in emergencies empower self-reliance for disaster resilience.

# Return of the Firestick

**Mr Brett Ellis**

**Emergency Management Victoria**

**Uncle David Wandin**

**Wurundjeri Elder**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

Australian scientific earth core sampling suggests that the mega fire ceased around 8,000 years ago signifying that fire lore, customs and practices had established a balance between man, fire, flora and fauna.

Using 'the right fire' Aboriginals maintained the balance of Country and as such enabled themselves and all living things to survive and thrive.

More than 200 years ago that balance was interrupted. Aboriginal fire lore was broken, fire practices were ceased, and the landscape changed due to vegetation clearance and uncontrolled hot bushfires.

Unfortunately, Aboriginal fire lore is still being broken. Our Country is sick. Contemporary fire and land management practices are compounding this issue, with indications showing increasing larger and more frequent devastating and costly mega fires the future trend for Australia.

Current fire and land management practices are continuing to impact the sacred canopy and dry out the environment. With climate change the need for healthy canopy and understory will be essential to assist the environment to remain cool and resilient with increasing temperatures.

Aboriginals have dealt with climate change before and ensuring fire lore and practices are reinstated will provide the needed protection and management to allow the environment to be prepared and protected.

The Return of the Firestick Project was initiated in 2015. What started as a piece of research has led to Victoria linking with Indigenous Fire Practitioners from around Australia, the establishment of a national workshop and the formation of a national body to support Indigenous communities around Australia to strengthen this knowledge and the application on Country.

The aim of the project is to reinstate the ancient cultural knowledge of the Firestick and build the capability and capacity of Indigenous communities to lead the education and training of traditional fire with land management agencies, landholders and the broader community.

# ‘We want to show people what kids can do’: a participatory student-led evaluation of the Strathewen-Arthurs Creek Bushfire Education Partnership

**Lisal O'Brien**

**Strathewen-Arthurs Creek Bushfire Education Program**

**Grade 6 student presenters**

**Strathewen Primary School**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

On February 7th 2009, a major bushfire disaster devastated the small rural town of Strathewen. The local primary school, the old fire station, the community hall, and most of the houses in the area were destroyed. Amongst the small population of 200 people, 27 lives were lost. Ten years on, the school has been rebuilt and through a community-based partnership with the Arthurs Creek-Strathewen CFA, the Grade 5 and 6 students have been participating in an award-winning place-based bushfire education program.

Through this program, now in its fourth year of delivery, students build their knowledge and skills for assessing local bushfire risks and they investigate the actions that people can take to mitigate, prepare for and respond to bushfire emergencies. They also apply their knowledge and skills to student-led creative arts projects that centre on the production and dissemination of locally relevant bushfire education materials.

In 2017, RMIT's Centre for Urban Research conducted a summative evaluation of the program. The evaluation found that the program is a highly effective mechanism for increasing children's genuine participation in bushfire risk reduction. In 2018, recognising the importance of ongoing evaluation for strategic decision-making and continuous improvement, the school community supported the students to undertake their own multi-stakeholder evaluation of the program. The students developed the research questions, co-designed the research instruments, collected the data and analysed the results.

This student-led approach to program evaluation represents a bold step forward in child-centred bushfire risk reduction and the students are eager to share their findings with a wide audience of researchers and practitioners. In the words of the students: ‘We want to show people what kids can do. Sharing our research at this conference is a once in a lifetime opportunity’.

# On heatwave risk communication to the public: new evidence informing message tailoring and audience segmentation

**Dr Scott Hanson-Easey, Dr Alana Hansen, Dr Susan Williams,  
Professor Peng Bi**

**University of Adelaide**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

Natural hazards risk communication campaigns cannot be ‘all things to all people’. Conventionally, age (very young and older people) and pre-existing health conditions are employed as key vulnerability factors upon which messages are tailored and target audiences segmented. Arguably, these segmentation criteria are too blunt and are at risk of neglecting acutely vulnerable individuals and households who struggle with multiple, interlaced social vulnerabilities, including: poor quality housing, social isolation, living in ‘hot spot’ suburbs (urban heat islands caused by lack of vegetation), low socio-economic status, and health and mental health problems.

Our research findings suggest that greater attention should be paid to the tailoring of heatwave messages consistent with the ‘lived experience’, values and beliefs of vulnerable communities, which will improve the salience and persuasiveness of messages. Moreover, findings suggest that communicated heatwave information was commonly perceived as ‘redundant’ (superfluous and ‘common sense’ information).

Carefully tailored messages bearing contextualised and salient adaptation strategies may overcome information redundancy, empowering vulnerable individuals and households to enhance their resilience to heatwaves.

# The lived experience of four disasters – insights into community urban resilience experiences

**Alice Simpson-Young, Kristin Gabriel**

**Resilient Sydney**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

There is currently little information on how communities experience disasters beyond the costs of immediate insurance claims. This means the long term psychological, social and financial impacts borne by individuals and communities are unquantified and invisible. Research undertaken by Resilient Sydney and the Sydney Environment Institute sought to rectify this. Our research outcomes address the themes of connection and wisdom within the 2019 Australian Disaster Resilience Conference.

The ‘Insights into Community Urban Resilience Experiences’ research project examined community resilience to shock events in Metropolitan Sydney. The project highlighted that the lived experiences of residents and service providers to shock events is largely absent from resilience research, policy and practice. The project focused on how these experiences can inform initiatives that minimise household and neighbourhood disruption, trauma and suffering. It made recommendations for policy, program, and resourcing interventions to efficiently and effectively limit the impacts of future shock events and reduce human suffering.

This study used focus groups and the System Effects methodology to identify the impacts, barriers and enablers experienced by residents and emergency and non-emergency service providers in relation to 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires, the 2016 East Coast Low in the Northern Beaches, the 2016/17 heatwave in Penrith, and the 2014 Martin Place Siege.

Our findings support calls for policy development that acknowledges the wisdom and lived experiences of a wide range of stakeholders via community engagement. It identifies the System Effects methodology as a tool capable of accounting for the variability of such accounts in a way that translates community wisdom into meaningful recommendations for decision makers.

Overall, this research found that improving resident and service provider experiences of shock events requires greater attention to the emotional and social aspects of resilience. Our recommendations include interventions to focus on increasing connections between service providers and communities as fundamental to ensuring communities survive and recover well from disaster events.

# The future is now for the inclusion of women in emergency management planning

**Ms Mary Farrow**

**Emerald Community House**

**Presenting to the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference 2019.**

The challenges for women in their everyday lives pose a threat to their wellbeing in disasters, coupled with domestic violence and financial disadvantage. Negative outcomes are compounded for women and those in their care when they experience physical, mental and emotional violence during and after disasters and are displaced from their homes. But the application of gender equity, empowerment and inclusion in planning, relief, response, recovery and resilience roles has the potential to improve the broader wellbeing outcomes for women, their children and their families.

Traditional roles and responsibilities present obstacles for women in participating in decision-making, skills development or gaining access to resources. Yet, women manage risks every day and connect through strong, respected social networks. So why is there a lack of women involved in emergency planning?

Women who work in the community sector are key interfaces for successful emergency management. The community at large can benefit from the wisdom and inclusion of local women as active decision makers on emergency management planning committees. Community development practitioners strengthen the community to absorb stresses and raise collective resilience overall to better manage adverse events in the short and long term according to the Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook (AIDR 2018). A majority of community caring roles are performed by women as employees and volunteers. Their inclusion and input have the power to improve survival outcomes and deliver on the goals of emergency management where they live and work.

As the director of the Centre of Resilience at Emerald Community House, Mary Farrow has used community development principles to empower women who live in high risk places. This presentation will expose the obstacles to equitable inclusion and identify strategies to gain a seat at the planning table.