

adrc 24

Australian Disaster  
Resilience Conference

🐦 f in #ADRC24



# The Coffs Coast Multi-Lingual Emergency Warnings Network

a community-government-NGO partnership for disaster communications in 22 languages

Luke Barbagallo, City of Coffs Harbour  
Biba Honnet, St Vincent de Paul  
Erik Rau, Australian Red Cross

Aligned  
to the



afac24

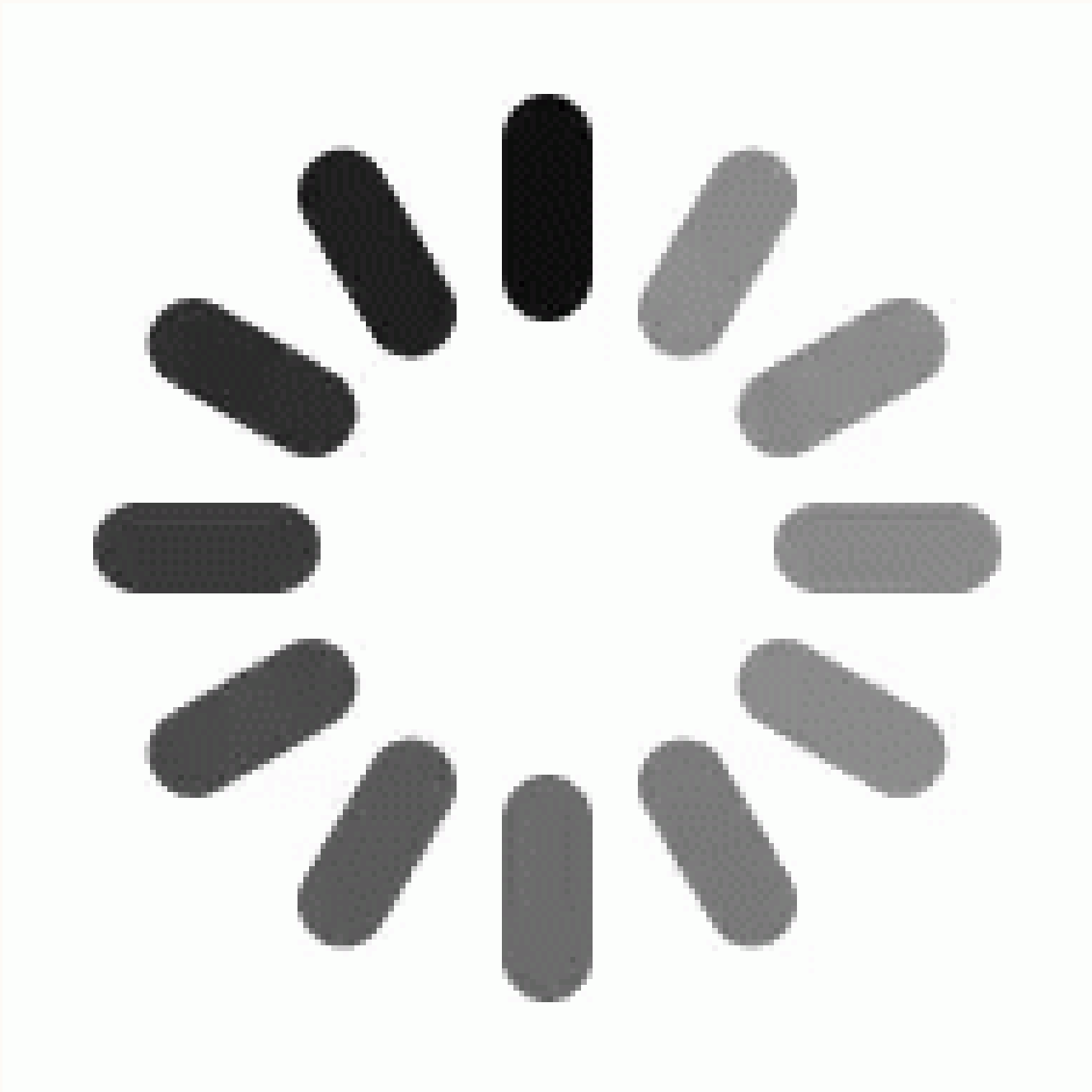
powered by INTERSCHUTZ

CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

3 – 6 SEPTEMBER 2024

ICC Sydney

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**



# WHAT WE'RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT

Our Context

The issue and the Solution

The Who

The Why

The How

# OUR CONTEXT



**DISASTER  
MANAGEMENT  
CONTEXT**

**COMMUNITY  
SERVICES  
CONTEXT**

Red Cross  
Community Recovery  
&  
Resilience Officer

Community  
Recovery Officer  
Program

North  
Coast  
Settlement  
Service



# HAZARDS & PAST IMPACT

---

17 small coastal catchments

---

Surrounded by State & National Parks

---

2019 Bushfires

---

2020, 2021 & 2022 Floods + historical

---

2021 Supercell Hailstorm disaster

---

COVID

# EMERGENT COMMUNITY CONTEXT

---

Refugee Welcome Zone

---

9% speak language other English at home

---

20% of these people do not speak English well, or at all

---

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Visa brings regular injections of new minority language speakers



# THE ISSUE



Minority language users are not receiving / understanding emergency warnings when they are released



PPRR concepts communicated through an Australian cultural lens and vernacular are not always easy to translate

# THE SOLUTION



Provide accessible, accurate and timely emergency warnings using network of community leaders who verbally translate and amplify warnings made by Combat Agencies



Support community leaders to understand PPRR concepts through an Australian cultural lens and vernacular, and effectively communicate them in first language

## THE MEWN OBJECTIVES:



Addressing inequity and its impact on **disaster resilience**



Pushing beyond supporting diversity and moving into **embracing inclusion**



Building and valuing **social cohesion, social capital, and social infrastructure**



**Inclusive community development** and engagement



Reimagining vulnerability: moving from weakness to **strengths-based approaches**



Partnerships, collaborations, alliances, **coalitions** and networks



# **THIS IS NOT A NEW IDEA...**

We're building on existing work in our  
community

# WHO IS INVOLVED?

St Vincent de Paul

City of Coffs Harbour

Australian Red Cross

With support from:

NSW Reconstruction Authority

NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Coffs-Bellingen LEMC & NSW Police

# SOME OF THE LANGUAGES IN THE NETWORK

14



# WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Building capacity with these leaders in understanding and emergency warnings creates opportunities for deeper engagement on preparedness

We anticipate the network can evolve to support recovery, and could support minority language user access to/in:

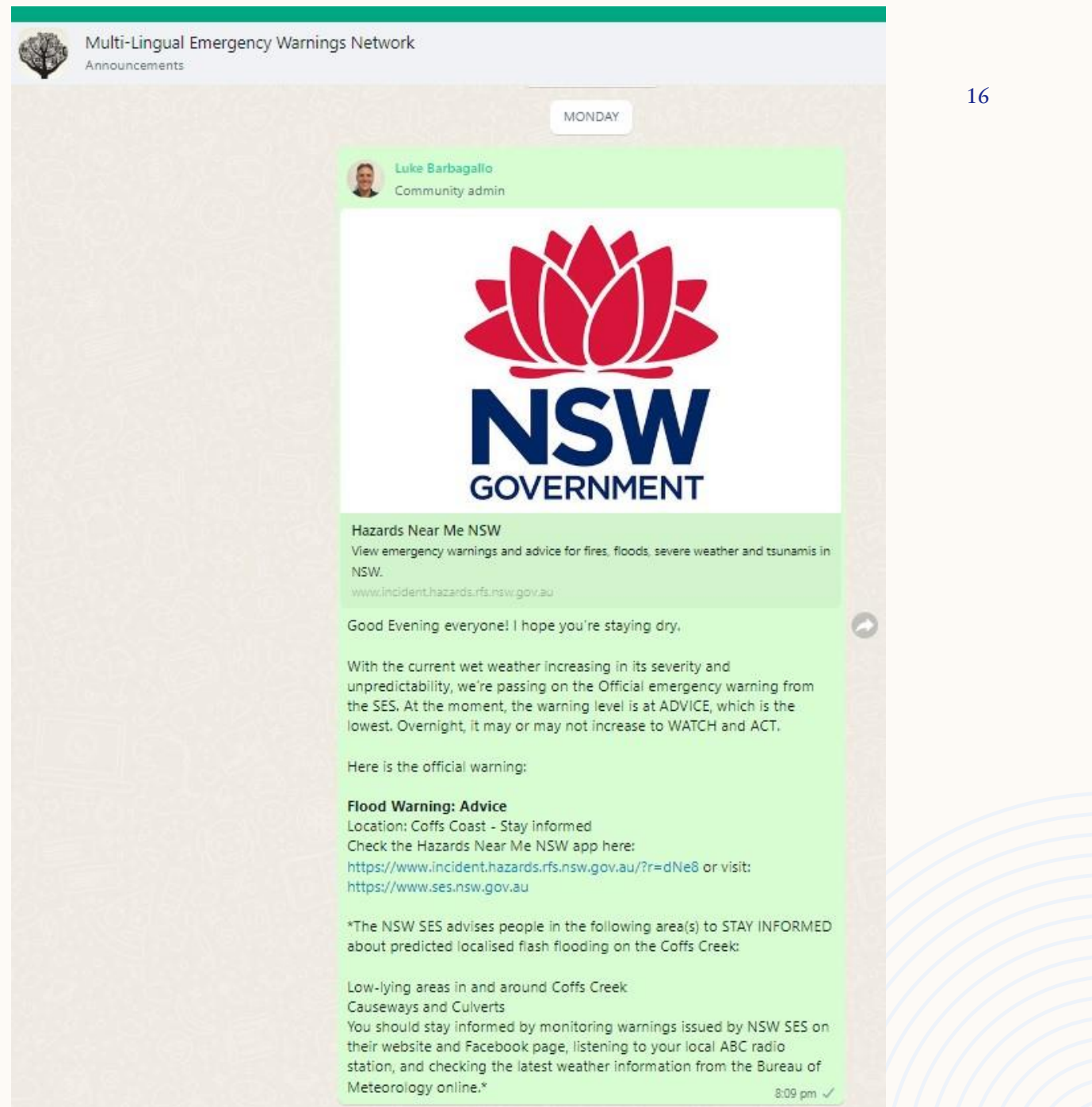
Evacuation centres

Recovery centres

Community engagement and consultations post disaster

# HOW DOES IT WORK?


1. Official warning issued by combat agency
2. MEWN Coordinators share official warning into the MEWN Whatsapp group with a simpler English version of the official warning, alongside the relevant warning icon







# HOW DOES IT WORK?

3. Community leaders reshare icon + audio message translation of the simpler English warning.

 **Luke Barbagallo**  
Community admin



HazardWatch



Coffs Coast  
flooding - Stay informed  
Advice - Coffs Coast  
flooding - Stay informed  
[www.hazardwatch.gov.au](http://www.hazardwatch.gov.au)

A simpler English version of the warning that you can share with your community is:

Please be aware of dangerous weather!

- Overnight on Monday and on Tuesday, there may be flooding of the Coffs Creek & low lying roads.
- Stay away from ALL floodwater. Do not walk in flood water or drive across it.
- For more information, check the Hazards Near Me App, or Hazard Watch Website

Please share this weblink to the warning with your audio message to the community: <https://www.hazardwatch.gov.au/alert/66d6fee4-d467-4a57-8c94-9c7963dd4hf7>

 **Luke Barbagallo**  
Community admin

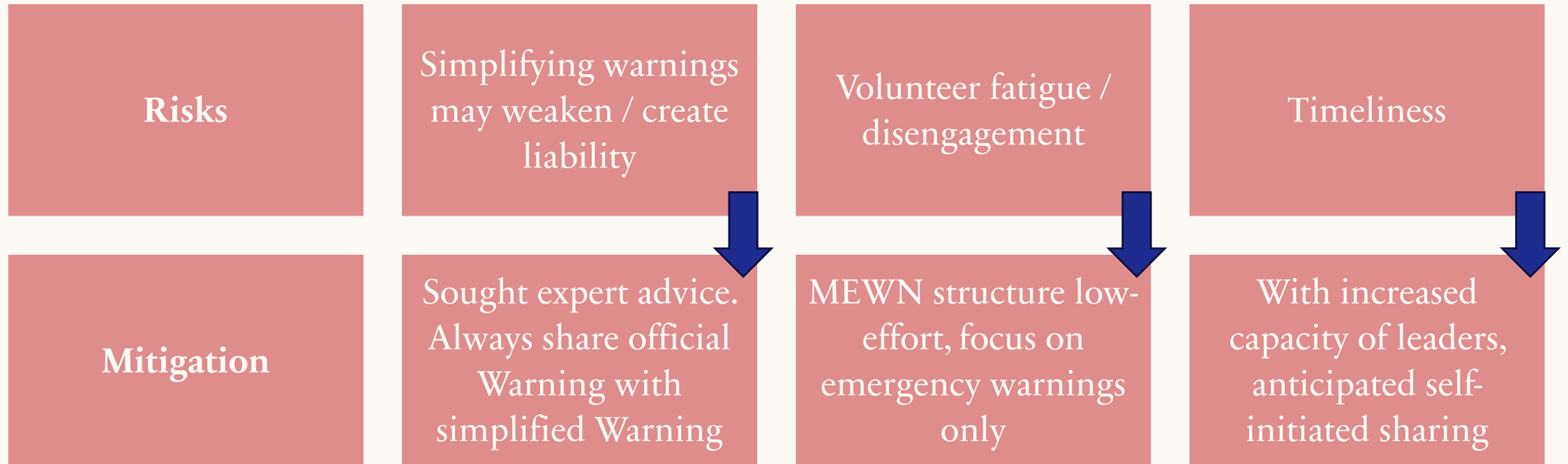


**FLOOD ADVICE**  
Stay informed

You can share this image with the audio message 8:13 pm ✓

 5

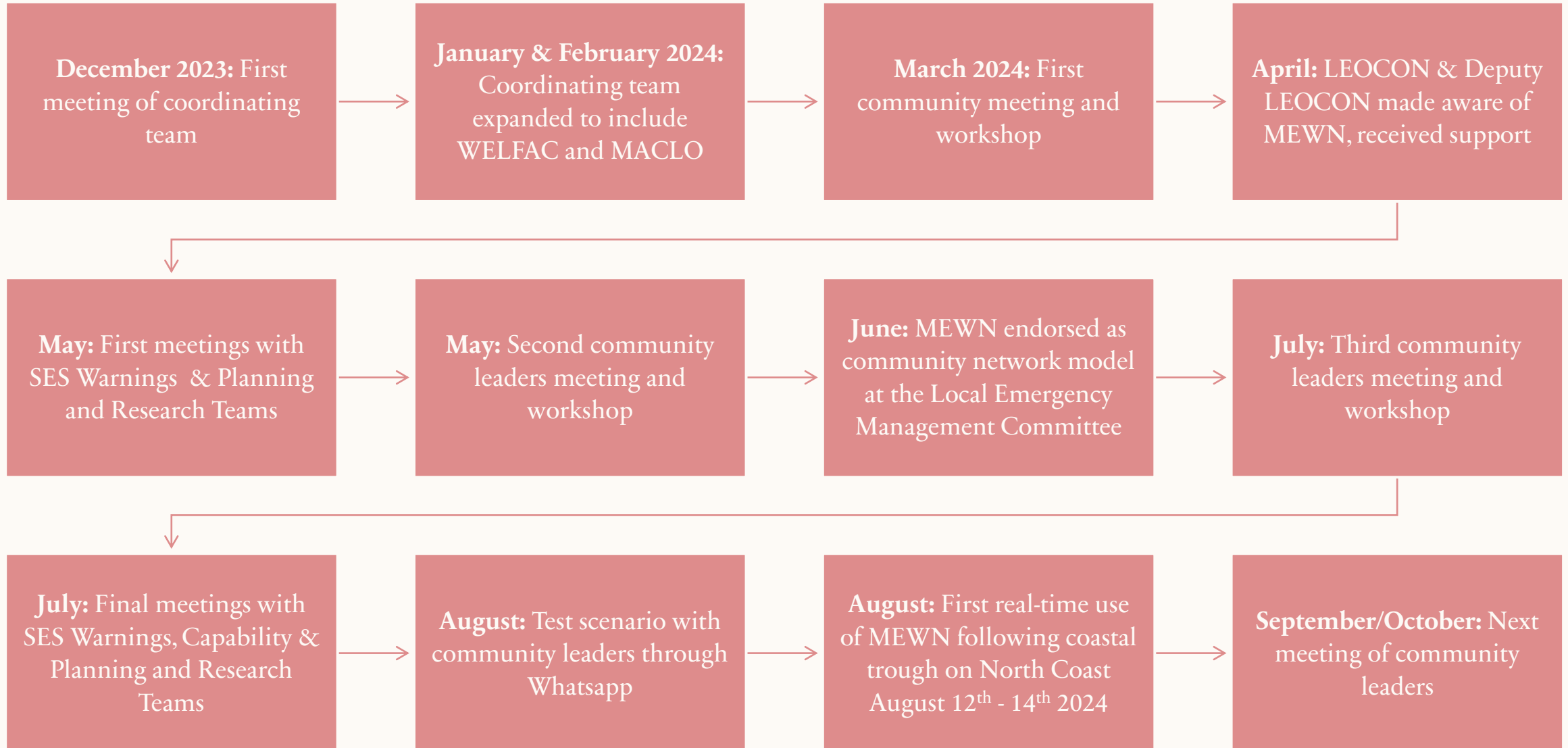
# RISKS



# RISKS



# TIMELINE



# LESSONS LEARNED



Early-stage community development work is highly ambiguous compared to command-and-control operating environments, can create tension.



Risk of re-traumatizing leaders and communities must be a constant consideration.



The simpler the network, the better.



Volunteer community leaders are time poor and in high demand; we have to be efficient and respectful of their time.



We can't let the goals of emergency services or other orgs expand MEWN scope UNLESS it is community led.



'Amplifying' the AWS warnings effectively relies on sharing both official and simpler English version in tandem.

# THINGS TO LEARN



The varied cultural differences in emoji use and message acknowledgement amongst the community leaders



Gain better understanding of how amplified warnings influence behaviour in target communities



How the network performs under pressure of a Watch & Act or EMERGENCY warning



Are we working with the right leaders / who's not in the room?



What does 'BAU' look like for the network?



# **THANK YOU**

Luke Barbagallo

Biba Honnet

Erik Rau