

# 110 years of community resilience in Australia: Lessons from Australian Red Cross

September 2024



**Red Cross pays our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Custodians across this country, and to Elders, past, present and emerging.**

# From Spanish Flu to COVID and beyond

- Key events and influences
- Evolution of policy and practice
  - Individual and Household Preparedness
  - Long term impacts and Community-centred Recovery
  - The evolving focus on Resilience
  - Community-led Resilience
  - Dealing with Collective trauma
- The Power of Partnership
- Looking ahead



Celebrating 110 years of  
Australian Red Cross

# Key events and influences

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## Significant 'disasters'

- World Wars
- Spanish Flu (1918-1920)
- Cyclone Tracy (1974) mass evacuation
  - National Registration and Inquiry System/Register.Find.Reunite.
- Ash Wednesday (1983)
- Indian Ocean Tsunami/Bali Bombings (early 2000's)
  - Global/local
- Black Saturday (2009)
  - \$379+ Public Appeal
  - 3 years+ recovery program
- Cyclone Yasi/Brisbane Floods (2010/11)
- Black Summer (2019/20)
- COVID 19



# 1974 - Cyclone Tracy

December 1974

- 71 people deceased
- 45,000 homeless
- 35,000 evacuated

Red Cross

- Registration of evacuees
- Provision of blood services and first aid
- Shelter and catering
- Support at evacuation centres
- Material aid



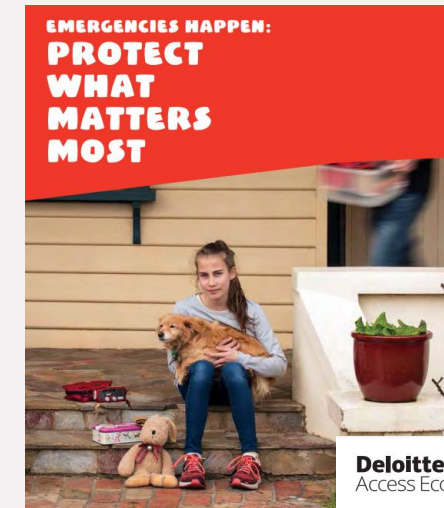
# Disasters are about people

- Disasters impact upon, individuals, families, places, networks, businesses, livelihoods
- No two people experience the same disaster
- People may lose a lifetime of memories, belongings, treasured pets, irreplaceable possessions and years of hard work
- The consequences are long, complex, disruptive



## Other significant events/initiatives

- RediPlan
  - a focus on Household preparedness
- Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience
- Collective trauma
  - Martin Place siege
  - Bourke St. Tragedy
  - Dreamworld accident
- Beyond Bushfires research partnership
- AIDR



Your Emergency  
**RediPlan**  
[redcross.org.au/prepare](http://redcross.org.au/prepare)

**Deloitte.**  
Access Economics



Building resilience to natural disasters  
in our states and territories



# Individual and household preparedness

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# EmergencyRediPlan

Emergency Services / Resilience / Nationwide

## RediPlan Overview

REDiPlan is Red Cross' all-hazards emergency preparedness tool that can be used by people and households throughout Australia.

RediPlan encourages people to think about risk reduction measures they could take to minimise the psychosocial impacts of disaster and other crises on their lives.

### RediPlan contains six key messages:

- Prepare Your Mind
- Get in the Know
- Get Connected
- Get Organised
- Get Packing
- Start a Conversation.



Your Emergency  
RediPlan

[redcross.org.au/prepare](https://redcross.org.au/prepare)



## Impact

### What impact does this work aim to have?

- **Outcome 2:** People collaborate to share information, strengthen community connection and support resilience
- **Outcome 8:** People understand the psychosocial impacts of disaster
- **Outcome 11:** People have the information needed to make decisions

### What impact are we having?

In FY23 we have delivered EmergencyRedi workshops to 890 people.

- 88% of respondents were likely or high likely to take action to prepare
- 99% felt better prepared to deal with an emergency as a result of the session
- Three months later, 72% of respondents had taken action to better prepare for an emergency.

## Highlight

The Perth Hills Preparedness Evaluation of communities who had attended an EmergencyRedi workshop found that most participants (63.9%) had used their emergency plan during the bushfire, and reported that having the plans:

- were effective in reducing harm to themselves and their family during the emergency
- increased confidence in responding to the emergency
- increased knowledge about what steps to take, and prompted earlier evacuation.

*Participants had engaged in a wide range of preparedness activities. Most frequently, participants reported having planned the best ways to exit the area, talked with family members about preparing, learnt about the hazards that affect their area, and arranged adequate insurance.*

# Get Prepared App – Re-launch

Emergency Services / Resilience | Nationwide

## Overview

The new improved Red Cross Get Prepared app, co-created with NRMA Insurance, is an important emergency plan companion. It allows users to digitally complete an Australian Red Cross RediPlan - our all-hazards emergency plan.

Using the Get Prepared app, you complete your comprehensive RediPlan which includes key contacts, meeting places, animal plans, key documents, special items, medical information and stress management plans. All your vital information, all in one emergency plan.

The end result is a PDF RediPlan you can save, print and share with your important people.

## Impact

### What impact does the App aim to have?

**Outcome 11:** People have the information needed to make decisions

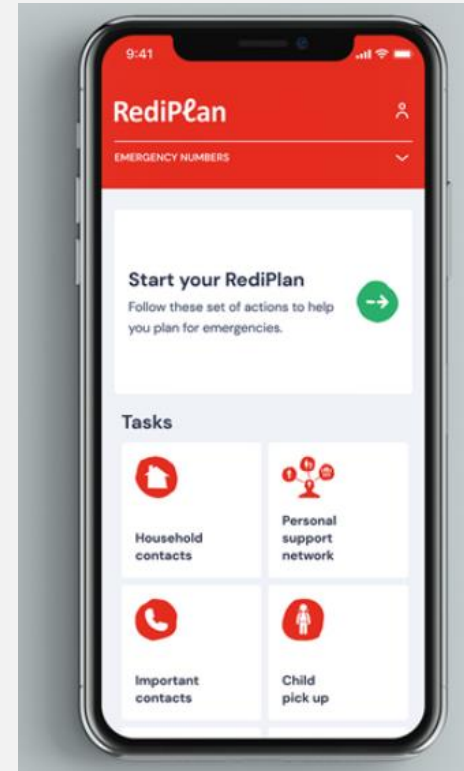
### With the re-launch, this is what we are hearing so far:

- Our volunteers and staff have given overwhelmingly positive feedback and are excited to use the app in their day to day work
- Volunteers who regularly use the existing app have said they are surprised at how much they like the new version
- Our youth preparedness teams are excited about using the app now in high school and youth preparedness workshops
- Our CALD resilience teams have given excellent feedback and hope to expand on accessibility in future releases

## Highlight

For the re-release of the new app in the month of May 2023 we had:

- 2,013 downloads (+589%) and 70,273 updates (+9,633%)



Download for iOS and Android now



# Long term impacts and Community centred recovery

03

# Black Saturday

February 2009

- 176 people lost their lives
- 2000+ homes destroyed
- 400,000+ hectares destroyed

Red Cross involvement

- 26 relief centres
- 22,000 registrations
- 1,000+ volunteers
- Public appeal in partnership with Vic Govt.



## Black Saturday Recovery focus

- \$379m donated to Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund
  - Balancing act
    - Community and individual need
    - Donor intent and desire
    - Public expectation
- Long term recovery program
  - Recognition and response to long term community need
  - Psychosocial focus
  - Beyond Bushfires research partnership



## 2019/20 Bushfires

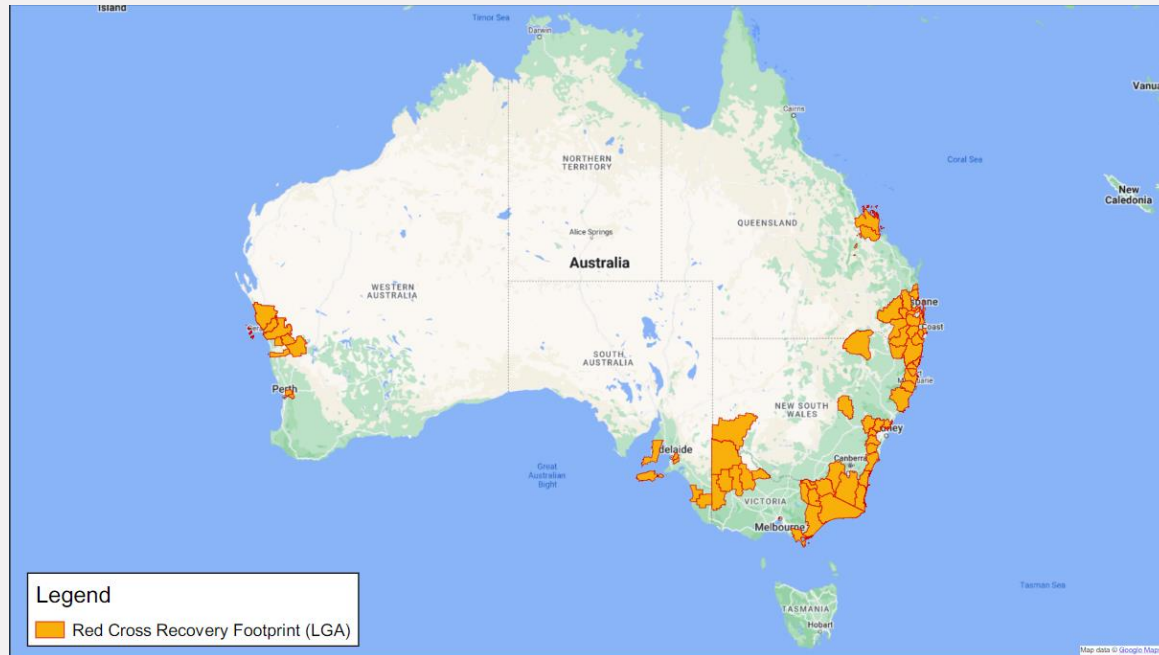
- 37 fires
- 6 states/territories impacted

### Red Cross involvement

- 3,350 volunteers
- Pfa and other support at 176 evac/relief centres
- 65,000 registered with R.F.R.
- Public appeal
- Long term recovery program



# 2019 – 22 Recovery footprint



Operation	S/Ts	# of LGAs	# of FTE staff
<b>2019/2020 Australian Bushfires</b>	NSW, QLD, VIC, SA, TAS	63	39
<b>2021 New South Wales Floods</b>	NSW	8	3
<b>2021 VIC Storm Recovery</b>	VIC		
<b>2021 Wooroloo Bushfires</b>	WA	2	2
<b>2021 Tropical Cyclone Seroja</b>	WA	15	10
<b>2022 SE Qld &amp; NSW Floods</b>	QLD & NSW	19*	15



# The evolving focus on 'Resilience'

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# Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience Initial report – The Cost of Disasters

## Mitigation

- \$50m each year is spent on mitigation measures, with the average annual spend on recovery measures totaling \$560m. (For every \$10 spend on recovery measures, only \$1 is spend on mitigation).
- Carefully targeted investment in resilience measures now will reduce Australian Government expenditure on natural disaster relief and recovery by more than 50% by 2050.
- Specifically, an annual programme of Australian Government investment in pre-disaster resilience measures of \$250 million has the potential to generate budget savings of \$12.2 billion for all levels of government by 2050.



# Australian Business Roundtable/Deloitte Economic cost of the social impact of natural disasters

## Health and wellbeing

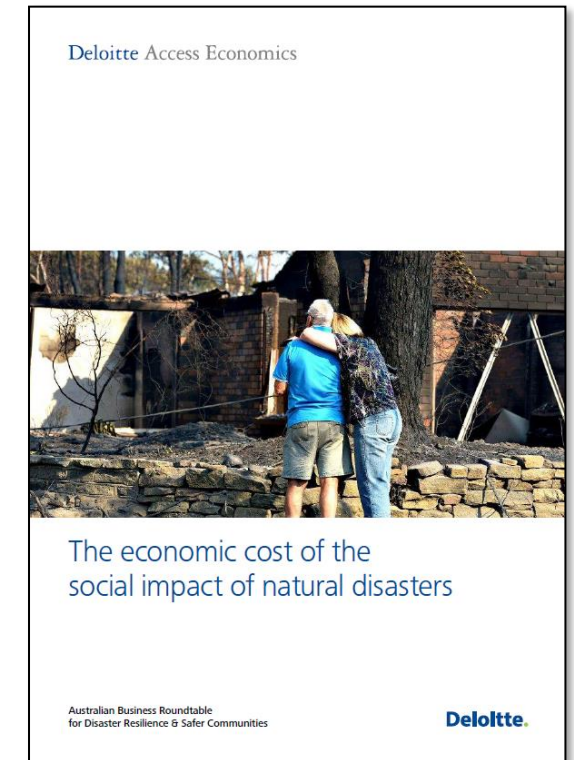
- Relationship breakdown
- Mental health impacts
- Ill health and chronic disease
- Alcohol and drug misuse

## Education and employment

- School enrolment and completion
- Student academic outcomes
- Short/long term unemployment

## Community

- Community dislocation
- Disruption of social networks
- Loss of heritage and culture
- Environmental damage



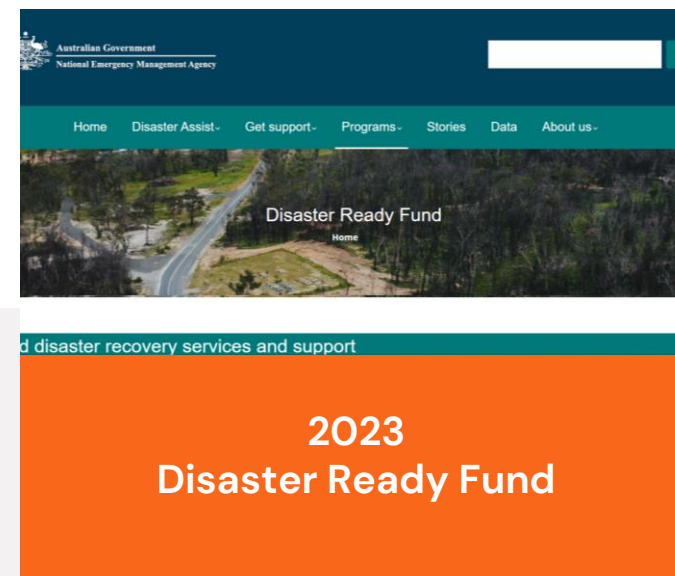
# Disaster resilience policy



Australian Red Cross partners with key corporates to start asking the right questions and push policy boundaries.



The Federal Government responds and momentum grows around the sector's understanding of pre-disaster resilience building.



\$200 millions per year is a very good start, but is only the beginning.

# Community Resilience

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## Effective risk reduction: Household and community focus

- A resilient community is one in which all members understand what is needed, know their roles and are connected to amplify action;
- Undertaking personal action at the household level consistent with the community's plan
- Building/enhancing social infrastructure and social capital

# Disaster Resilience Program

Disaster Resilience Program

Individual, household and targeted preparedness



RediCommunities (community level preparedness)



Sector and Societal change



# RediCommunities: Building resilience within communities

Emergency Services / Resilience / Nationwide

## RediCommunities Overview

Disaster resilience work at a community level focuses on strengthening social capital and collective efficacy, as well as taking practical actions to prepare. It involves tapping into existing networks and structures, the community identifying their own strengths and vulnerabilities, and developing a plan to address those. Community disaster resilience requires more than supporting individual community members to build their own resilience. There are distinct factors that can strengthen community resilience, including participation, a sense of belonging, collective efficacy, and social infrastructure (community organisations, local leaders and shared communication channels). To identify, strengthen and sustain these factors, our teams act as facilitators in communities rather than imposing ideas or projects on them.

RediCommunities is evidence-informed and acknowledges that local communities know their history, strengths, risks, people, resources, capacities and geographical location best. The program is a flexible, iterative, and community led approach where we alongside communities to strengthen their resilience to the impacts of disasters.

The RediCommunities project ran as a pilot, starting in 2015, in the Grampians Region of Victoria. The project focused on the communities of Pomonal, Moyston, Elmhurst, Dadswell's Bridge and Great Western. The successful pilot led to significant benefits including increased community connectedness, emergency preparedness planning and increased capacity to anticipate and cope with the impacts of emergencies. The pilot was extended in 2018/2019, working with additional communities across Victoria.

## Program Impact

### What impact does this work aim to have?

**Outcome 1:** Communities are taking localised, community-driven action to build resilience and recover from disasters

### What impact are we having?

- 94% reported an increased knowledge about what they should do in an emergency.
- 86% reported increased knowledge of disaster resilience.
- 78% felt more connected to their community.
- 90% felt supported by Red Cross.

*"The people of Kangarilla are doing the work in advance so they are prepared to make decisions and take action should an emergency arise, it's amazing to see how the Kangarilla community has broadened its awareness about the various things that can happen in an emergency. There's a lot of local knowledge held in the community and the project is capturing it for everyone's benefit."*

*"It can be challenging to galvanise a group to work towards the same goals, but community connectedness is at the heart of this program. Residents have a role to play just as much as the services that will come to assist in an emergency."*

## Program Highlight

*"The process in Mt Beauty is working because it truly is community-led. Residents now understand that they need to be responsible for their own preparedness and safety during an emergency. The community is strengthening their resilience and responsiveness to disasters and emergencies. They are better connected, and that will also help them in times of recovery."*





# Pillowcase workshops

Emergency Services | Resilience | Nationwide

## Pillowcase Overview

Aimed at students in Years 3 and 4 (ages 8-10), the Pillowcase program is a one-hour workshop delivered by Red Cross volunteers and staff. It involves engaging discussions and interactive activities to help students:

- Understand and discuss the importance of being prepared
- Prepare their mind for the thoughts and feelings that may arise before, during and after an emergency
- Know what to pack in an emergency kit
- Each student is then given a pillowcase to decorate and take home, to start their own personal emergency kit

The program increases knowledge and preparedness skills among children, with reports showing students have applied the skills and during recent bushfires and had remained calm during evacuation. The program is also an important catalyst for household preparedness and community conversations regarding readiness.



## Impact

### What impact does this work aim to have?

- **Outcome 2:** People collaborate to share information, strengthen community connection and support resilience
- **Outcome 8** People understand the psychosocial impacts of disaster
- **Outcome 11:** People have the information needed to make decisions

### What impact are we having?

In FY22/23 we have delivered the following:

- Number of students attended = 8369
- Number of sessions delivered = 279
- Number of schools: 150

An external evaluation by Curtin University measured Pillowcase's impact on participants' ability to prepare, respond, and recover from disaster. It demonstrated that participants remembered preparedness skills and stress management strategies and applied them during the WA Wooroloo Bushfire event in 2021.

## Highlight

*"My kids have all done the Pillowcase Programs with their schools, and funnily enough – and they did these a number of years ago – they're teenagers now, but they all remember what they learnt from that. And my girls actually still have their pillowcases... and one actually still used that to pack her stuff that she really wanted to take with her, even for this Wooroloo fire, and she's sixteen." - Evaluation respondent*

*"In all cases when kids evacuated, they had a plan, they were aware. They're told to keep their pillowcase close to their bed. In most cases, parents were surprised it was the first thing they picked up. Parents wouldn't have thought of it." Evaluation respondent.*

# Collective Trauma

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# Collective Trauma

- Martin Place/Lindt Cafe siege
  - Memorial support
- Bourke St. Tragedy
  - memorial management,
  - psychosocial advice and support
- Dreamworld
- Hunter Valley Bus Crash



# The power of partnerships and collaboration

07

# Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience



## Founding partner

Governance

Strategy

Advice and information



## Volunteer Leadership

Eight Volunteer Leadership Programs delivered

Heavily subscribed

Increasing demand



## 'Recovery Uncovered'

New joint webinar series featuring Disaster Recovery Mentors

Providing insights from a community perspective

800+ registrants

# Looking ahead

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# Looking ahead: The challenges

- The risks
  - Planning for the next disaster, not the last
    - Climate change
    - Geopolitical situation
    - Cyber security/stability
    - Pandemic
- The impacts
  - Increasing scale and diversity of events
  - Cascading and concurrent disasters
- The system
  - Individual and community capacity and motivation
  - Multiple jurisdictions & organisations
  - Funding mechanisms
  - Growth, coordination & collaboration



# Looking ahead: Research and collaboration

## Social capital return on investment

To build an evidence base and economic case for the role of social capital in disaster resilience.

- Literature review
- Conceptual framework linking social capital and disaster resilience
- Empirical investigation HILDA data and disaster exposure
- Cost-benefit analysis



## Humanitarian impacts of climate change

To understand the current and future humanitarian impacts of climate change in Australia, to support co-development of locally led, regional enabled, and nationally supported initiatives to address and reduce these impacts.

- Literature review
- Nationwide report
- Mapping of locally led community action
- Policy briefs and advocacy materials



# Some things to take away

## Resources and information

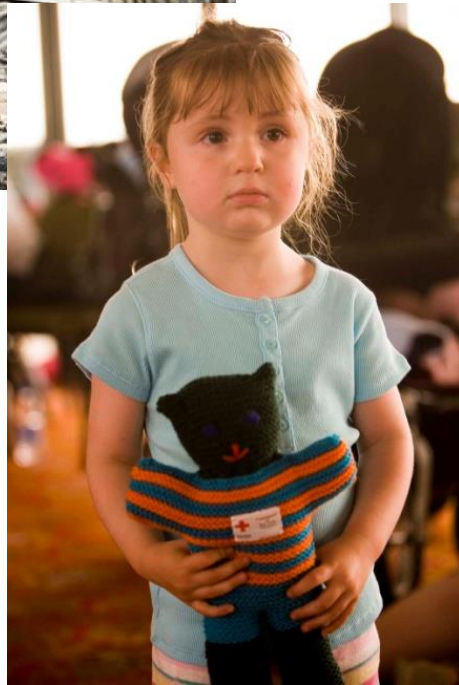
[www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au)

[www.aidr.org.au](http://www.aidr.org.au)

## Questions to ponder

- In a rapidly evolving world how do we ensure that the emergency management model/framework remains fit for purpose?
- How can we ensure that community remains at the core of all key decisions, both strategic and operational?
- In a rapidly expanding environment how do we promote collaboration rather than competition?





Celebrating 110 years of  
Australian Red Cross

Everyone. Always.

110 years  Australian Red Cross