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National Emergency Management Agency

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

# SPOT LIGHT SERIES

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# Acknowledgement of Country

AIDR acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which you all join us from today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this event.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters across Australia.

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# Housekeeping

- You will remain muted and your camera will not be activated for the duration of today's event.
- Today's event will be recorded and made available after the event.
- Please enter questions for our speakers in the Q&A function, not the chat box.
- Please use the chat box to share any thoughts or reflections during the presentation
- Please be respectful to each other when posting your comments or questions.

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# Welcome

John Richardson

*Executive Director*

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR)

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# Speaker Introduction

Ika Trijsburg

*Director Urban Analytics*

ANU Institute for Infrastructure in Society

Australian Government
National Emergency Management Agency

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

# Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience | 25 June 2025

**Ika Trijsburg** | Head of Democracy and Diplomacy, Municipal Association of Victoria
Director Urban Analytics, Institute for Infrastructure in Society, The Australian National University

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"**Disinformation** is false information that is deliberately created to harm, mislead or evoke an emotional response in a target audience."

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Anti-vaccines:
Measles
&
COVID 19

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Anti-trans
&
Targeting
female leaders

CLIMATE & SUSTAIN-ABILITY

Climate
Emergency
&
Emissions
Reduction

FIRST NATIONS, MIGRANTS, CULTURE & RELIGION

The Voice
Referendum
&
Southport riots

URBAN PLANNING

15 min cities
&
Smart cities
&
Infrastructure

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# DISINFORMATION LIGHTNING RODS

Elections

Policymaking

Events – global and local

Disasters and crises

Transitions

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# DISASTERS

## 1

Disinformation about the existence, severity or cause of a disaster or weather event: These question whether the situation is accurately represented by authorities.

## 2

Disinformation about disaster response effort: These manipulate heightened fears and uncertainty during disasters to promote distrust and chaos.

## 3

Disinformation that uses disasters as an opportunity to exacerbate other prejudices: Pre-existing societal divisions offer fertile ground for disinformation

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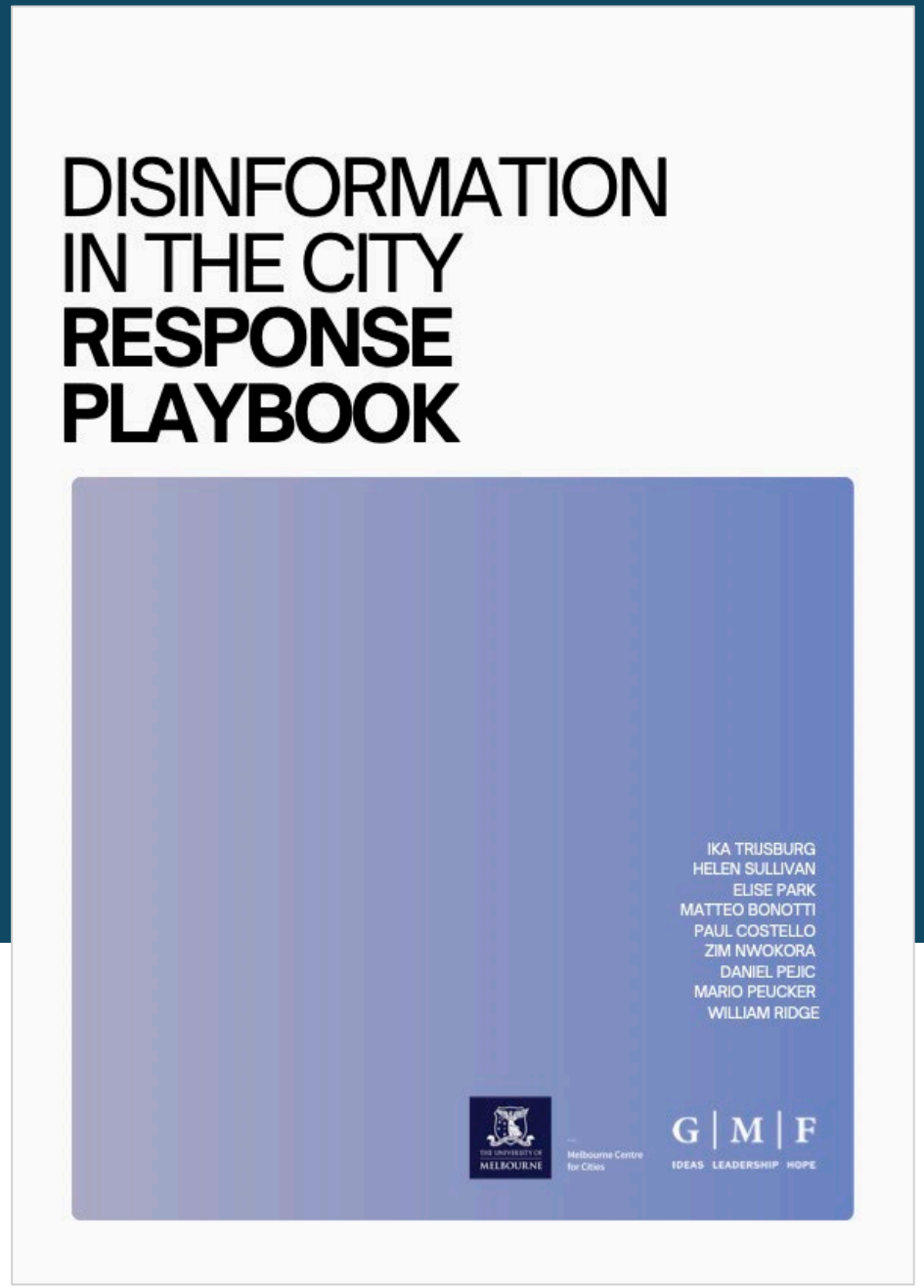


Ika Trijsburg, The University of Melbourne
Helen Sullivan, The Australian National University
Elise Park, The University of Melbourne
Matteo Bonotti, Monash University
Paul Costello, German Marshall Fund of the United States
Zim Nwokora, Deakin University
Daniel Pejic, The University of Melbourne
Mario Peucker, Victoria University
William Ridge, The University of Melbourne

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## PRE-EMPTION & EARLY DETECTION

Understand the fault lines: Political, economic, urban/rural, social

Know the existing disinformation narratives and themes

Build trusted networks: Institutions, information, people, places

## PRE-BUNKING & SPREAD PREVENTION

Activate relationships, provide accurate information and assist people to make sense of information they might receive

Work with trusted and legitimate voices to minimize spread of disinformation

## DE-BUNKING & RECOVERY

Accurate information and alternative narratives, extensive engagement

Rebuild and establish trusted relationships, support impacted groups, address grievance narratives, build community

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**BEFORE**
Pre-emption
and early detection

**DURING**
Spread prevention
and pre-bunking

**AFTER**
De-bunking
and recovery

## Community outreach programs.

Community outreach is an effective tool for reaching community where they are, including those not otherwise communicating with city governments. This enables cities to understand shifts in sentiment as they occur, the impacts on targeted communities, and assist in providing targeted supports and maintaining communication during and after disinformation-fueled events. Outreach should include groups prone to creating and sharing disinformation, and groups targeted.

## Social media analysis.

Monitoring social media discourse is important for identifying disinformation both in relation to city initiatives and more broadly. It includes flagging specific content, terms and behaviours to identify and anticipate issues. Collaboration across sectors, levels and cities is particularly useful for providing real-time insights into trends and terms to flag.

## Map the disinformer landscape.

Often disinformers use repeat tactics and narratives. They also often connect with known groups and platforms locally and globally. Proactively catalogue offenders, narratives and tactics to pre-empt future disinformation campaigns, understand who is involved, and who might be vulnerable to messaging.

## Assemble advisors.

Assemble advisory bodies and brains trust early. Ensure this network of advisors is sufficient to inform your understanding of different communities and sectors across the city. Invest in the onboarding process to develop trusted relationships between advisors. Engage these groups to test information and see if they're appropriate and effective.

## Increase frequency of messaging in the lead up to key events.

In the lead up to key events, such as policy decisions, key events or elections, increase communications around potential points.

## Increase critical literacy.

Invest in education campaigns and opportunities, both within the organisation and in the community. This includes education-based programs and games-based platforms.

## Be fun(ny) with it.

If done well, humour can be an effective tool for approaching sticky subjects. Humour can break down barriers, disarm tension, create connections, and be a memorable source of information. However, timing is critical. Humorously framed communication during crisis situations – even low-severity crises – has been shown to negatively impact trust in cities.

## Fill the information vacuum.

Proactively and immediately provide people with clear, comprehensive and factual information – especially after key events. This reduces the risk that the information ecosystem becomes saturated with confusing, false and conspiratorial information.

## De-platforming creators.

De-platforming is a tool used in attempt to limit the influence of disinformation campaigners. De-platforming is usually achieved by blocking a social media profile or banning disinformers from speaking in public forums.

## Support those affected.

Provide psychologically safe spaces and services for communities affected by disinformation. These can be online and in person. Cities should also provide clear messaging to support targeted groups or individuals, to publicly demonstrate that it does not endorse harmful and false narratives.

## Sticky facts & counter-information.

Use robust data and 'sticky facts' - simple, evidence-based content delivered in ways that people will remember to counter disinformation.

## Providing counter-narratives.

Counter-narratives incorporate counter-information, but engage people through storytelling and personalisation. Counter-narratives can be more effective than simply presenting the facts because they engage people emotionally.

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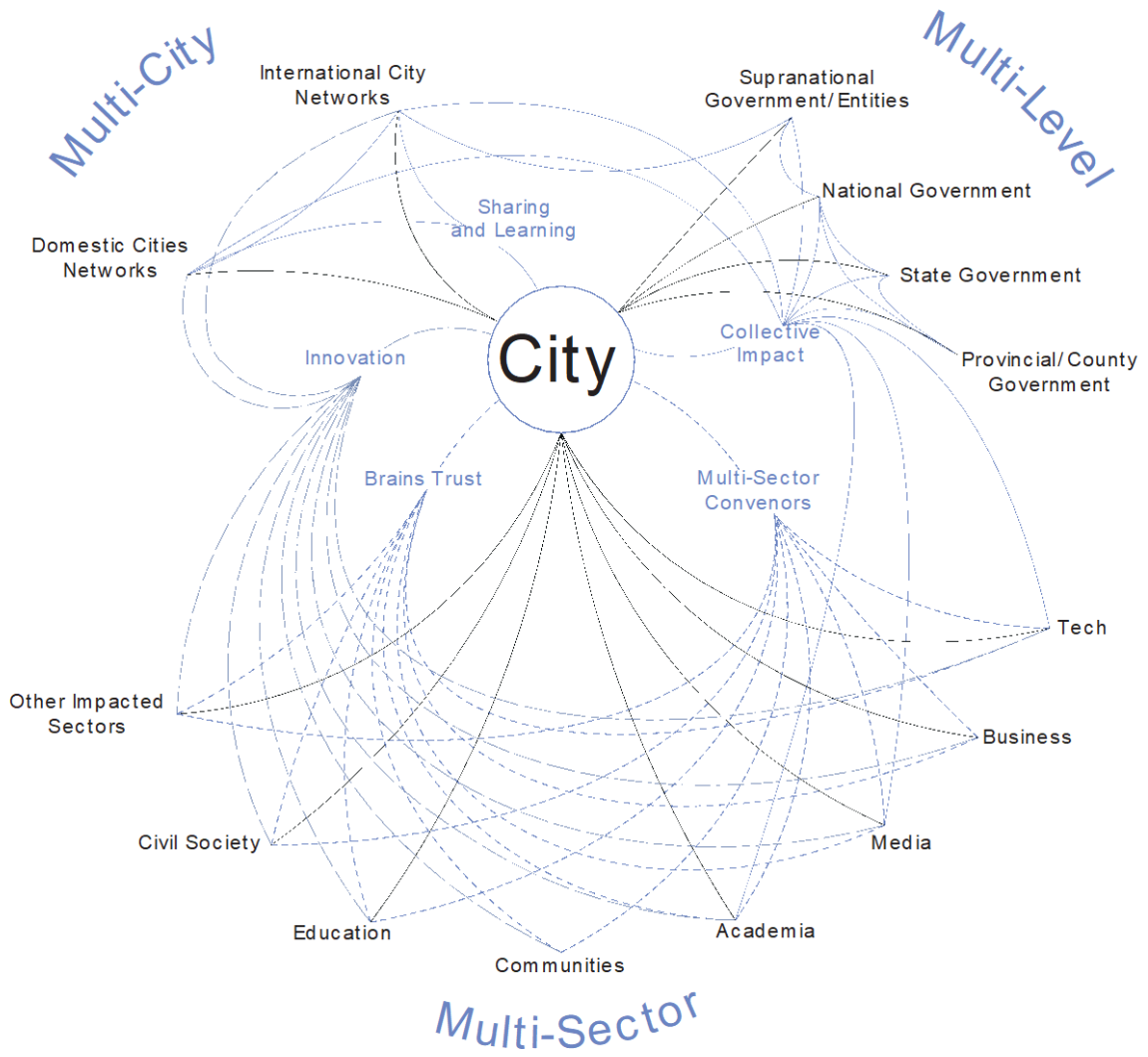
# COLLABORATE

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**Download the Disinformation in the City Response Playbook at:**
https://www.mav.asn.au/mavlab/engagement/disinformation

**Ika Trijsburg** | Head of Democracy and Diplomacy, Municipal Association of Victoria
Director Urban Analytics, Institute for Infrastructure in Society, The Australian National University
itrijsburg@mav.asn.au

**Micro-credential: Recognising and managing disinformation**

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# Q&A

Don’t forget to put your questions in the Q&A function.

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# Event concludes

Thank you for attending today's webinar.

**Register now for the next AIDR webinar.**

Indigenous disaster resilience research webinar
Wednesday 9 July 2025, 1.00pm – 2.30pm AEST

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