

How shared responsibility is perceived by community sector organisations: insights from a qualitative study following the 2022 Queensland floods

Peer reviewed

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Introduction

While the principle of ‘shared responsibility’ is found within many disaster risk reduction (DRR) frameworks, it is rarely clearly defined. The principle has attracted sustained scholarly critique concerning lack of clarity around lines of accountability, neoliberal influences, organisational cultural norms, role confusion and resource constraints. All these factors undermine shared responsibility as a normative, guiding principle applicable to all DRR actors ranging from the Australian Government through local community centres. The lack of explicit definition results in ambiguity as to where responsibility sits to assist those at risk of harm from emergencies and disasters (Maguire et al. 2022).

Previous studies of CSOs involved in DRR reveal a divide between the aspiration of shared responsibility and its operational reality at the grassroots level (Baldwin 2020; Cooper et al. 2020; Drennan and Morrissey 2019; Ingham et al. 2020; Ingham and Redshaw 2017; McLennan 2020; Satizábal et al. 2022; Singh-Peterson et al. 2015). This paper reports on a small empirical project conducted in South East Queensland¹ that investigated how frontline workers in CSOs who deliver place-based risk reduction and resilience-building activities interpret the notion of ‘shared responsibility’. The rationale for this research was to clarify the role

1. South East Queensland is the most densely populated area of the state and includes Brisbane, Ipswich, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast.

Abstract

Studies of how Community Sector Organisations (CSOs) negotiate their role in place-based disaster risk reduction and resilience reveal a fundamental disconnect between the policy aspiration of ‘shared responsibility’ and its operational reality at a grassroots level. This paper presents findings from an empirical study in South East Queensland about how workers in frontline community sector organisations interpret the concept of shared responsibility. Seven representatives from 6 different community sector organisations were interviewed about what shared responsibility meant to them. The study found that these workers understand this term to involve horizontal service coordination and teamwork between service organisations rather than vertical lines of accountability between government and the community. Study participants described shared responsibility in very context-specific ways and perceived that their role in shared responsibility was often minimised and misunderstood by government agencies. This study also found that the responsibility of property developers and strata scheme operators in risk reduction is confusing and poorly understood. This remains an underexamined area of research. This paper recommends actions that move accountability towards these influential private sector actors. This study demonstrates that despite shared responsibility being a key principle of risk reduction policy, community sector workers are unfamiliar with the term. Reform of policy needs to meaningfully detail how responsibility is shared.



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CSOs play in DRR and to identify gaps in distributed roles and responsibilities among other actors.

This study makes 2 specific findings. First, the participants in this study perceived shared responsibility as operating at a hyper-localised level that predominantly involves horizontal rather than vertical lines of accountability. Second, that shared responsibility of private sector actors in DRR, especially property developers and strata scheme operators is underacknowledged and underexplored. The first of the findings correlates with existing literature in which CSOs consider their activities to be routinely misunderstood within the emergency management sector and, in this case, local government councils. The second finding prompts a call for accountability to be directed towards private sector actors to reduce risk for apartment dwellers in risk-prone areas.

This paper describes the literature on shared responsibility with a focus on CSOs. A brief overview of the international, Australian and Queensland Government policy settings for shared responsibility is provided. This gives important context to better understand shared responsibility from the perspective of place-based CSOs. The second part of this paper describes our research methods, findings and discussion. Observations from 7 individuals whose roles involve supporting communities in emergency response, recovery and resilience-building activities are presented, followed by commentary on the implications of study findings.

Literature review: shared responsibility

Increasingly frequent and severe climate change-induced disasters means that governments alone cannot reduce disaster risk. The idea that responsibility for DRR is shared by all actors in society is a driving principle of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (Sendai Framework) (UNDRR 2015). The framework is considered to be ‘urgent and critical’ (UNDRR 2015, p.10) in light of the accelerating and increasingly severe effects of climate change. The Sendai Framework represents a global consensus on ‘not only reducing the risks posed by disasters, but also the manner in how they are to be addressed’ (Atkinson and Curnin 2020, p.4).

Although the framework holds nation states primarily responsible for DRR, stakeholders across society have important supplementary roles as ‘enablers’ in providing states with support in line with national policies, laws and regulations (UNDRR 2015, Article 35). The framework provides explicit guidance on encouraging public and private stakeholders to participate in DRR activities. In the context of CSOs, the Sendai Framework calls for the active inclusion of women, children and young people, people with disability, older people, Indigenous peoples and migrant communities to contribute to DRR efforts

(UNDRR, Article (36)(a) (i–vi)). Private sector businesses, professional associations and financial institutions also have roles to integrate disaster risk management into their business models and practices and to develop normative frameworks and technical standards (UNDRR, Article 36(c)).

In Australia, shared responsibility has been a central feature of disaster resilience policy since the creation of the Australian *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (National Strategy) in 2011.² Despite multiple references to the principle of shared responsibility within the strategy, it does not provide specific guidance on how responsibility is to be shared and who is accountable for specific tasks or failures. The policy broadly outlines collective, society-wide responsibility for resilience to be delivered by designated stakeholder groups, including government, business, individuals, non-government organisations and volunteers (Commonwealth of Australia 2011). The role for business is highlighted to include the provision of ‘resources, expertise and many essential services on which the community depends’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2011, p.v). Notably, the strategy does not impose any obligations on the private sector to take actions to reduce risks associated with their operations. In affirming the frontline role played by non-government and community organisations, the National Strategy states:

It is to them that Australians often turn for support or advice and the dedicated work of these agencies and organisations is critical to helping communities to cope with, and recover from, a disaster.

(Commonwealth of Australia 2011, p.v)

Shared responsibility in Queensland disaster management arrangements

In Queensland, local governments are responsible for managing emergencies and disasters rather than state governments (Queensland Government 2003). However, the term ‘shared responsibility’ is not afforded legislative definition. The *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2022–2027*, or QSDR (Queensland Government 2022a), is the state’s overarching policy instrument for disaster resilience. It describes shared responsibility in the context of stakeholder participation as:

Resilience is a shared responsibility and the success of the QSDR will depend on the collective effort of individuals, communities, businesses and state agencies. Strong well-connected networks, together with a coordinated collaborative approach to increase alignment of effort across the disaster management cycle, will provide a primed environment for disaster resilience initiatives to take effect.

(Queensland Government 2022a, p.12).

2. It is noted that the principle of shared responsibility first emerged during a national inquiry into 2002–03 Australian bushfire season, as cited in McLennan *et al.* (2020, p.40).

Further:

Everyone has a role to play, and all Queenslanders are encouraged to consider what the objectives, strategic commitments and actions mean for them and how they can contribute to improving overall community resilience. (Queensland Government 2022a, p.12).

Similarly broad, aspirational language often appears in local council disaster management plans. For example, the Brisbane City Council Local Disaster Management Plan states that ‘the idea of shared responsibility [means] no one person or agency can do everything, but we can work together for a stronger, more resilient Brisbane’ (Brisbane City Council 2023, p.35).

DRR and resilience policy frameworks from the international level to national, state and local policy all broadly endorse the principle of shared responsibility but none clearly articulate how responsibility is to be shared and, more importantly, who is accountable (Box et al. 2013; Lukasiewicz et al. 2017; McDonald and McCormack 2022). The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements affirmed widespread acceptance of the concept of shared responsibility but it also recognised the need for a clear, robust and accountable system with ‘unbroken linkages’ from the highest levels of government through to individuals in the community (Biskin 2020, p.7). The findings of this study suggest that breaks in the linked chain of shared responsibility remain.

Shared responsibility and CSOs

There is considerable literature on the role that CSOs play across the full cycle of emergency and disaster management and in the building of community resilience. However, there is limited consideration of perceptions of shared responsibility by CSOs. A 2013 study on perceptions of shared responsibility in flood risk management examined this concept from various stakeholder perspectives but did not include the perspective of CSOs (Box et al. 2013). A briefing paper prepared by the Australian Red Cross contains an integrated literature review of the role of non-profit organisations in this context and includes enablers and barriers to leverage adaptive capacity (Australian Red Cross 2014). Recent studies have shown how dominant accounts of shared responsibility in DRR undermine the community development methodology and approach that CSOs typically deploy. Ingham and Redshaw (2017) studied community connections following the 2013 Blue Mountains bushfire and identified the need to ‘reconceptualise disaster preparedness, response and recovery from something ‘done’ to the community, to something the community expects to be involved in and be a part of’ (Ingham and Redshaw 2017, p.62; Ingham et al. 2020). This highlights the power dynamics that are exercised in formal emergency and disaster management

arrangements and the clash of cultures between top-down disaster coordination and bottom-up community-based approaches (Baldwin 2020; Crosweller and Tschakert 2021b). Satizábal et al. (2022) examined the complexities and experiences of CSOs undertaking risk reduction and resilience activities in the context of neoliberalism. They concluded that the political economy of state-led emergency management inhibits genuine opportunities to listen, learn and work with CSOs.

As place-based organisations, CSOs experience the disaster alongside the local community. The deep local knowledge and high social capital makes CSOs a crucial entry point to engage with communities (Muir 2021). CSOs are also well-placed to support self-organisation activities which have been recognised as a feature of community-led emergency and disaster management (Crosweller and Tschakert 2021a). Despite the significant contributions of CSOs, existing policy does not adequately recognise this expertise nor adequately fund the activities of these groups. This study builds on this literature by identifying how CSOs perceive and understand the principle of shared responsibility in the activities that they undertake.

The 2022 South East Queensland rainfall and flood event

Between 22 February and 7 March 2022, South East Queensland and northern New South Wales experienced an unprecedented rainfall and flood event. Flooding affected 23 of Queensland’s 77 local government areas with the Bureau of Meteorology issuing more than 500 warnings over the period (Taylor et al. 2023, p.15). In Brisbane, flooding was experienced from 25 February through to 27 February 2022. The Brisbane River peaked on 28 February after Brisbane and surrounding regions had received around 80 per cent of their average annual rainfall in less than one week (de Jersey 2022). It is estimated that more than 500,000 people, or one-tenth of the state’s total population, were affected in some way, either through lives lost, homes inundated, loss of power and essential services, or major road closures (IGEM 2022). This event is described by the Insurance Council of Australia as the ‘costliest insurance event in Australian history’ as it resulted in more than \$6 billion in insured losses (Insurance Council of Australia 2023).

Various reports and inquiries into the rainfall and flood event were subsequently undertaken. On 1 March, just one day after the Brisbane River peaked, the Brisbane City Council announced an independent review to be led by the former Queensland Chief Justice the Honourable Paul de Jersey. Its geographic remit only extended to the Brisbane local government area and the Terms of Reference had a narrow focus on compliance and assessment of the council’s disaster management framework. There was little

community engagement in the review and no submissions sought from councillors or agencies outside the Brisbane City Council (de Jersey 2022).

On 15 March 2022, the Queensland Government requested the Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management (IGEM) to undertake a report into the effectiveness of preparedness activities and the response to the rainfall and flood event. In its report, IGEM acknowledged the important contribution of non-governmental organisations and noted that these organisations provided valuable assistance by operating recovery hubs or delivering outreach services, clean-up help and sourcing goods and donations for flood-affected communities. IGEM also noted various local community suggestions to improve response, including adopting a warden system and establishing local flood committees in flood-prone areas. However, the report made no recommendations to implement these suggestions (IGEM 2022, p.36).

A large, mixed methods study on community experiences of the 2022 floods was conducted by Taylor et al. (2023). The study analysed data collected from a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews with flood-affected individuals in both Queensland and New South Wales but did not apply an analytical lens to shared responsibility. Although many of the policy recommendations identified in that study relate to issues of accountability, risk-sharing and task allocation for various actors involved in emergency management, the role of CSOs in the context of shared responsibility was not a specific focus.

Methods

A project team within the Queensland University of Technology established a study to interview workers from

place-based neighbourhood centres, community collectives and hubs who were involved in supporting disaster-affected individuals and families following the 2022 floods. Drennan and Morrissey (2019, p.331) note that CSOs take many forms such as industry associations, community housing organisations, faith-based organisations or sporting groups. This study regarded CSOs and their clients as falling within the definition of a place-based ‘community’; however, we note that this term is contested in the literature (Fairbrother et al. 2013; Titz et al. 2018).

Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 individuals (6 staff and one volunteer) representing 6 CSOs operating in Brisbane suburbs affected by the 2022 floods. The suburbs were Logan, Yeronga, Graceville, West End, Mitchelton and Pine Rivers. These locations cover a range of local government areas and include both inner-city and outer-suburban areas with diverse demographic, social and economic indicators. Interview participants were identified using a purposive sampling method (Lewis-Beck et al. 2004). A member of the project team had previously worked for the peak body for Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland and brought industry connections to the project, which assisted with participant recruitment.

Individuals were invited to take part in the study if they satisfied the criteria of being directly involved in providing disaster response, recovery and resilience-building activities associated with the floods. All individuals who were approached agreed to be interviewed. All participants were female and most were employed on a part-time basis in recovery service navigator roles. Table 1 shows their role, work type, age bracket and type of CSO the participant worked in.

Table 1: Breakdown of interview participants.

Code	Gender	Role title	Work type	Age bracket	Type of CSO	CSO size
I1	Female	Community Resilience Coordinator	Full-time	50–60 yrs	Community Hub (incorporated)	Medium (approximately 10 FTE*)
I2	Female	Community Development Worker	Part-time	20–30 yrs	Neighbourhood Centre/House (incorporated)	Small (approximately 3 FTE)
I3	Female	Community Engagement Officer	Part-time	30–40 yrs	Neighbourhood Centre/House (incorporated)	Small (approximately 5 FTE)
I4	Female	Member	Volunteer	50–60 yrs	Community Collective (informal network)	Large (approximately 100 volunteers and supporters)
I5	Female	Service Navigator	Part-time	40–50 yrs	Neighbourhood Group (incorporated)	Large (approximately 20 FTE)
I6**	Female	Service Navigator	Full-time	40–50 yrs	Neighbourhood Centre/House (incorporated)	Large (approximately 50 FTE)
I7**	Female	Service Navigator (support)	Part-time	30–40 yrs	Neighbourhood Centre/House (incorporated)	Large (approximately 50 FTE)

*FTE = full-time equivalent staff. Details of FTE obtained from annual reports or in conversation with participants.

**I6 and I7 represented the same organisation.

Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared with the following indicative questions:

1. Can you give me a sense of what you do in the community-led disaster response space and how you go about it?
2. The term 'shared responsibility' is commonly used in disaster management. Can you tell me about your understanding of the term, and what it looks like in your context?
3. How aware is the community you work with of the concept of shared responsibility?
4. What do you think the community interprets its shared responsibility role to be?
5. Can you tell me about how your work and organisation supports the community to perform that shared responsibility? What actions are you performing? What gaps are you filling?

Participants were invited to share their perspectives on these questions as well as any ideas or observations they had about shared responsibility.

Procedure

Prior to the interview, each participant received a consent form and a participant information sheet that contained a brief description of what shared responsibility means in DRR circles, and a list of likely questions for discussion. All interviews took place online and each conversation ran for approximately 45 minutes. Data analysis involved manually coding and thematically analysing the transcripts in line with the Braun and Clarke 6 step approach (Braun and Clarke 2006; Braun et al. 2019).

Ethics statement

This study was approved by the Queensland University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (7056).³

Results

The interviews showed that shared responsibility, as interpreted by participants, involved self-organisation, horizontal service coordination and power-sharing as well as a perceived minimisation of CSO roles by local government. There was also confusion about the responsibility of property developers and strata scheme operators in risk reduction.

Shared responsibility as horizontal service coordination across the community service sector

When participants were asked to describe how they understand shared responsibility in the context of their

work, some admitted they had never heard the term before. After consideration, several participants described shared responsibility as something that applies to people and actions taken within and between individuals and CSOs in their own community, rather than as between different actors or levels of government. One participant emphasised the importance of role clarity between place-based CSOs to provide a 'united front'. They thought it was particularly important to provide people with good disaster-related support and to do everything possible to minimise confusion and rivalry between service providers. Another described service coordination this way:

I hadn't heard it framed as shared responsibility ... I guess we're trying to identify the responsibilities within the community that we're working within and trying to be clear about what our responsibility is, and what the other community support services that we work closely with, who we do a lot of referrals through, what their responsibilities are, because we are in a unique position where the bulk of our work has been through door knocking so it's very face-to-face with the community members.
(I2)

Within this hyper-localised context, participants also described shared responsibility as a process of encouraging individuals to develop their own sense of personal responsibility:

You know, sometimes ... throwing it back at people, it also gives them a feeling of ownership, gives them the opportunity to feel like whatever they're saying is valued as well. That all eventually ties into that shared responsibility.
(I3)

Translation of shared responsibility in very context-specific ways

The concept of shared responsibility was described in very relatable terms by the participants. They explained it as akin to 'cutting a cake', 'living in a share house' or 'having children'. One participant who assists culturally diverse communities described it by using a Malaysian cultural term, which they said was analogous to a 'working bee' in the Australian context. This reinforces the importance of ascribing real and tangible meaning to the term depending on the cultural context in which it is used. It also aligns with previous research findings that, while the concept is well established in academic and policy circles, it has not yet gained a similar level of awareness at the grassroots level (Singh-Peterson et al. 2015).

3. An earlier version of this paper sharing preliminary findings was presented at the IGEM Queensland Disaster Management Research Forum on 7 November 2023. Where this paper reports on participants' perceptions of shared responsibility, a previously published briefing paper includes broader themes about community resilience that also emerged from interviews (Taylor et al. 2024)

Because shared responsibility is that you agree that we have some responsibility in this plan. And if we don't have some responsibility in the sharing of that, you can't say you're going to share a cake and then you take the cake and leave the crumbs—that's not sharing. And so we've got to think that if it's a true share, I get to cut the cake and you can pick the piece. You know, like you do with your kids. (15)

And a housemate analogy:

My understanding of shared responsibilities: every day in whatever the situation is, the more people the better, the more brains that we pull together, the better. It also gives people the opportunity to participate, in terms of trying to do something for our community, you know, having that shared responsibility, it just divides the jobs up and just makes everyone feel important and involved. For me, it's like sharing a house with 3 different people that you don't know, [you] have that shared responsibility of cleaning the house and it just makes everyone feel more welcome and involved. (13)

Participants reflected on the distinctive role of CSOs as compared to other agencies involved in DRR and resilience-building. Themes of safety and collective purpose emerged:

I think everybody has a part to play ... Council has a part to play, Red Cross has a part to play. The part that the neighbourhood centres play is to be there to support the community in times of natural disasters when it's needed—and they're a good place. People are going to go there because they feel safe, but it's a good place for all those services to come together and share that responsibility of providing for those individuals. (16)

Most of the time, we get a lot of: 'You're the community centre, why aren't you doing it?' But we are a community centre—the community is that middle word, and it involves everyone in this region. (13)

CSOs perceive that their role is minimised and misunderstood by local government

Participants held mixed views about the extent to which local government understood their work in disaster support. While the majority generally agreed that local council plays an important role in coordination, none of the participants thought that the contribution of their CSO to response and recovery was properly understood by council. One participant levelled strident criticism at council representatives for their approach to working with CSOs:

I don't really think [they believe] there's a shared responsibility. We keep hearing about community-led. What they really mean is 'engaged with community' but they've just made their own mind up. Some of them are just like, 'Oh, we engaged with community, therefore, it's community-led'. That's just useless. It's just rhetoric. They're just using the words. We had a guy from community recovery last week start using community-led, and I don't even think he knew what the word was 2 days before. (11)

[X] is a perfect example. They say, 'Oh, we're going to share responsibility around the recovery hubs. Here are some signs, this is how you do it'. Council thinks they know best. And so they're just saying: 'This is a shared responsibility as we'll have recovery hubs. We'll give you some corflute signs to put up. You can just do tea and coffee and a charging station'. If that's what they think neighbourhood centres do, well, there's the door ... We're more than tinnies and the Mud Army, we're a lot more than that. And every neighbourhood centre who's ever worked in a disaster-affected community has always risen above a cup of tea and a charging station. It's just embarrassing. It's actually embarrassing to think that's what we do. (11)

Self-organising in strata properties

One participant resides in an apartment building in a flood-prone area and serves as the chair of the building's body corporate committee. They are actively involved in a place-based, grassroots collective that works to achieve flood resilience. This participant felt that local government agencies did not understand apartment living, even though vertical communities can be significantly affected by flooding:

We're not New York or London ... there's a lot of high-density living, a lot of vertical living like in Spain, but that's how they've done it forever. They just know how to live like that and the rules and who's responsible for what, whereas I don't think Australia or maybe Brisbane is quite as mature with that understanding as a community. (14)

This lack of understanding led to several body corporates experimenting with flood communication systems and processes so that residents who required specific assistance did not miss out on timely, accessible information and alerts. It also prompted a mindset shift in that all residents (tenants and owner-occupiers) were regarded as equal members of the apartment community. These initiatives helped reduce residents' trauma during the flood and people were out of their homes for a shorter period than they would otherwise have been:

They [government] fail to acknowledge that you can't access your home; your home may not be flooded, but ... lift services or basements are totally inaccessible for however long. Power, all of those sorts of things affect it. And that costs money to fix. Your apartment may or may not be affected if you're not on the ground floor, but then apart from that if you've got no power or basic functioning utilities (sewer/water) in a 20-storey building—let alone our local planning are trying to approve up to 90 storeys—where are you going to put all these people? They just sort of think, 'Oh well, you don't need to leave, that's voluntary'. Well, you do need to leave because how are you going to flush your toilets? (I4)

Sharing responsibility with the private sector

In the context of flood risk, participants questioned the shared responsibility of property developers, asking why developers continue to build apartment complexes in known flood zones, yet bear little accountability for what happens to those buildings when they flood. In Queensland, local governments oversee planning regulations for development assessments. The creation of disaster risk by seeking and granting approvals to construct apartment complexes in flood-prone areas remains lawful. Land use planning is a highly complex area with overlaid laws and by-laws. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the many associated issues of liability and responsibility that are areas of further research. But questions arising from confusion about the accountability of property developers were raised by participants. One participant drew a comparison between flood and fire management plans:

Where does the responsibility come? Is it just for [residents] to know? Should this be part of the developers putting together... like a fire management plan, you know, how many fire drills—fire has all this structure around it. I haven't lived through a fire anywhere, but I've lived through 2 floods. And you know, there's so much preparation and guidance and restrictions and rules around fire preparation, but nothing around floods. So people had no idea what to do, and neither did managers, body corporates, residents. Nobody. (I4)

Nobody asks, if there's a fire, are you prepared? Because it's a given. And that's very structured around the rules and how many times you must practise, and people have to know where their escape routes are. Flood, you know, it's too hard or it might devalue our building. That's just rubbish ... it's a selling point to say 'This building, yes, it will flood, but we have got plans and preparations, and we have done all this flood mitigation work. We know what to do to protect [ourselves]'. (I4)

Discussion

The results of this study show that shared responsibility is a foundational principle of emergency and disaster management but was poorly understood by participants. However, given the opportunity to describe the principle, a picture of horizontal power-sharing, intra-sector collaboration, teamwork and self-organisation emerged. According to the participants of this study, a disjuncture exists between what CSOs say they deliver to support people in disasters, and what they think local government agencies perceive as the CSO role. Similar examples in the literature also suggest that local councils often do not 'get it' in relation to working with CSOs in DRR and resilience-building work (Baldwin 2020; Ingham et al. 2020; Satizábal et al. 2022). This underscores the fact that the concept of shared responsibility is understood differentially and has no uniformity of perspective. Explicit definitions of shared responsibility as it relates to different sectors would improve lines of responsibility and accountability if the aspiration of working together in a coordinated, collaborative way is to be achieved.

While community self-activation in response to the 2022 flood is acknowledged (Taylor et al. 2023, p.10), self-organising approaches in strata properties is not well documented. The few available studies suggest that disaster preparedness is generally a low priority for property managers (Guilding et al. 2015) and owners who do not fully understand their obligations and lack funds to repair properties beyond the bare minimum (Finn and Toomey 2017). As rates of urban apartment dwelling in South East Queensland increase, further research to better understand how strata scheme operators ought to prepare their communities for flooding will be needed.

A further issue was the overlooked role of private sector actors in shared responsibility, in particular property developers and strata scheme operators, to reduce risk for apartment dwellers. Private sector actors have a 'fundamental role' in sharing responsibility for DRR (Commonwealth of Australia 2011, p.4; IGEM 2022, pp.98–99; UNDRR 2015), yet this study noted that shared responsibility of the private sector remains underexamined (Lukasiewicz et al. 2017, p.304). The lack of clarity about what shared responsibility means for the broad array of private sector actors and where their accountability lies results in many of them performing ad hoc, informal roles (Hunt and Eburn 2018, p.484). Pursuing the goal of shared responsibility in an era of escalating emergencies and disasters necessitates greater accountability to be directed towards these influential actors. The issue of developers' responsibility for risk reduction could equally be applied to the construction and management of other residential facilities that are built in flood zones. This could include aged care facilities and retirement or private

hospitals where elderly people with complex care needs may require significant emergency service support during evacuation (Callinan 2022). Climate change effects means that governments need to reconsider the division of risk and responsibility for all actors and, at a minimum, ensure that the private sector does not increase risk by developing areas with historical or predicted high inundation. The Queensland Government has hinted at the need for bold, timely and enforceable policy to manage what can and cannot be built on flood plains (Queensland Government 2022b, p.95). However, implementation of such a policy agenda is yet to be realised. Directing accountability onto developers and strata scheme operators for their roles in disaster risk for apartment dwellers in hazard-prone areas is urgently required given the lack of reported recognition of their responsibilities during the 2022 floods in inquiries and studies.

Study limitations

This small empirical study captured qualitatively rich data that explored various aspects of CSO work in the aftermath of a local flood event. This study presents place-based insights from a very small dataset and, given the limited number of participants, their responses cannot be seen to reflect the wider views of all CSO workers. In particular, the theme of private sector shared responsibility derived mainly from the views of one participant who spoke about this issue based on their experience. Relying on the view of one participant to generate a thematic finding is not optimal. However, we consider it a noteworthy theme in view of the lack of attention on private sector actors in the literature.

Another limitation is that this research did not investigate the views of emergency management authorities nor private sector actors. Research that includes these perspectives on how CSOs contribute to shared responsibility would enable deeper exploration of this issue. Future research that examines the experiences of CSOs providing assistance in other locations and in the context of different hazards would offer an opportunity to validate the findings of this study.

Conclusion

The research presented insights into perceptions of shared responsibility from the perspective of 7 CSO workers following the 2022 flood and rainfall event. The viewpoints uncovered reflect ongoing concerns about the roles of CSOs being minimised and misunderstood. Findings indicate that participants understand the principle of shared responsibility in context-specific ways. This raises an issue for implementation of the principle as without a common understanding of what shared responsibility

means or requires, there is little chance of coordinated action across governments, communities and the private sector. There is a need for a nuanced definition of shared responsibility within policy instruments that recognises the roles, functions and knowledges of organisations and how responsibilities should be shared in a coordinated way. The findings also move beyond vertical ideas of sharing responsibility by showing how CSOs conceptualise this term horizontally. Clear definitions of shared responsibility as they relate to different actors could be included in laws and policy frameworks. The shared responsibility of property developers and strata scheme operators is also highlighted and greater accountability on private sector actors is needed to reduce disaster risk for apartment dwellers in flood-prone areas.

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