

DisasterWISE Communities Network

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DisasterWISE Communities
Network
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In an era marked by compounding disasters, systemic inequities and climate uncertainty, Australia's communities are reimagining what resilience truly means. This article highlights how community-led approaches must be embedded into practice to improve recovery outcomes, build trust and drive long-term resilience.

DisasterWISE¹ is a community-led learning network pioneering new approaches to disaster resilience by centring self-determination and diverse knowledge systems. DisasterWISE operates at the nexus of social innovation, systems thinking and community development and strengthens disaster resilience by supporting communities to connect, learn and drive change.

Grounded in dynamic governance, decolonisation and trauma-informed practice, the network creates safe spaces for collaboration between communities, government, research and emergency management agencies. The DisasterWISE Communities Network has emerged as a bold, community-led learning network that disrupts discourse for stronger, just and thriving futures.

DisasterWISE sprang from the Fire to Flourish² program with funding from Monash University and The Paul Ramsay Foundation. After a co-design process by people with lived and learned experience of disaster events, DisasterWISE has grown into a movement of people who are building resilience through self-determination and community-led action.

The national network has an expanding membership and provides a vital piece of social infrastructure that:

- cultivates broad and diverse connections
- brokers varying ways of knowing across the membership
- amplifies community voices as leaders in recovery and resilience dialogue
- supports pathways to inform wider policy and practice
- advocates, promotes and supports community-led initiatives.

DisasterWISE hosts regular members meetings and monthly get-togethers to open discussion on topical issues. The network hosts a bimonthly book club and hosted an event in September showcasing and learning from community-led approaches. An online DisasterWISE learning platform provides a dynamic space for connection, sharing and dissemination for people involved in community-led approaches.

Having lived through the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, I know it is through lived experiences and by listening deeply to local and Indigenous knowledges, that we know communities must be at the heart of decision-making, planning and renewal. Those who have lived through disasters hold invaluable knowledge; wisdom that should be shared to support others facing disasters in the future.

DisasterWISE platforms provide an exchange of knowledge and dialogue across diverse perspectives to help navigate the complexities of climate adaptation and resilience. DisasterWISE's theory of change is a commitment to decolonisation, dynamic governance, decentralisation and trauma-informed practice. This foundation creates safe spaces; environments where respectful dialogue, critical reflection and collaborative learning can thrive.

Endnotes

1. DisasterWISE website www.disasterwise.com.au.
2. Fire to Flourish, Monash University, www.firetoflourish.monash.