

adrc 26

Australian Disaster
Resilience Conference

19 – 20 AUGUST 2026

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RESILIENT LISMORE THE REPAIR TO RETURN PROGRAM

Rebuilding homes, restoring wellbeing and enhancing resilience through
trust-based community-led recovery

Elly Bird – Executive Director



Australian Government
National Emergency
Management Agency



Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience



We acknowledge the the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation.

We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge their enduring connection to Country and to Culture.

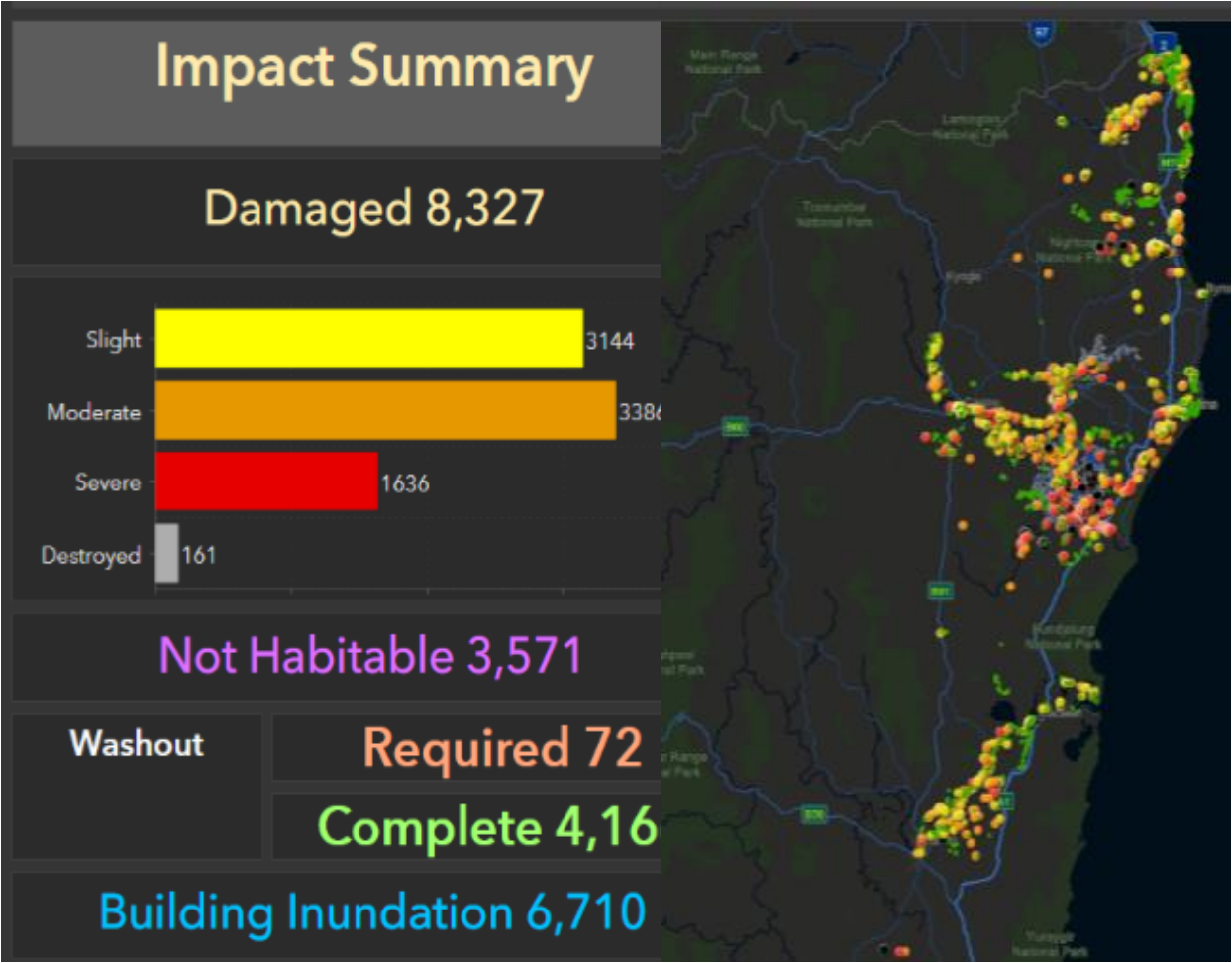
We acknowledge the Widjabul Wia-bal People as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, and all Traditional Owners and Custodians across the Bundjalung Nation.



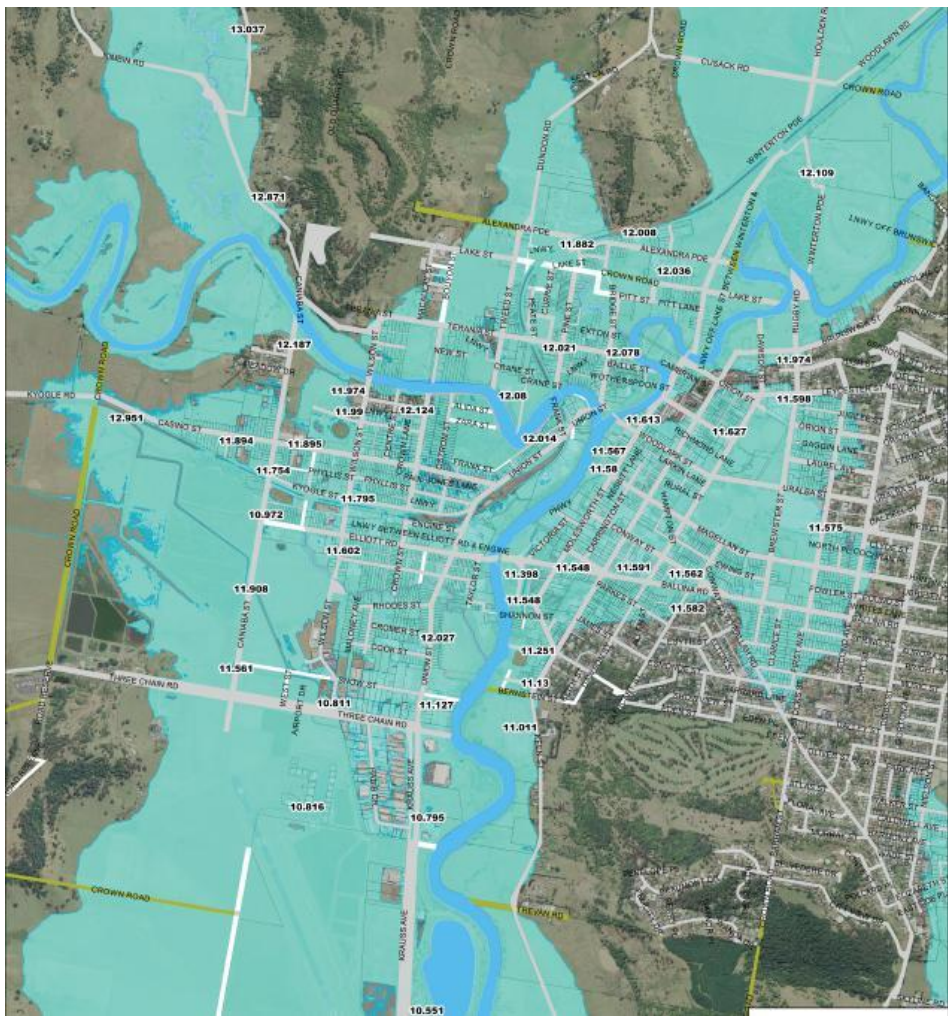


Photo: Alex Clarke

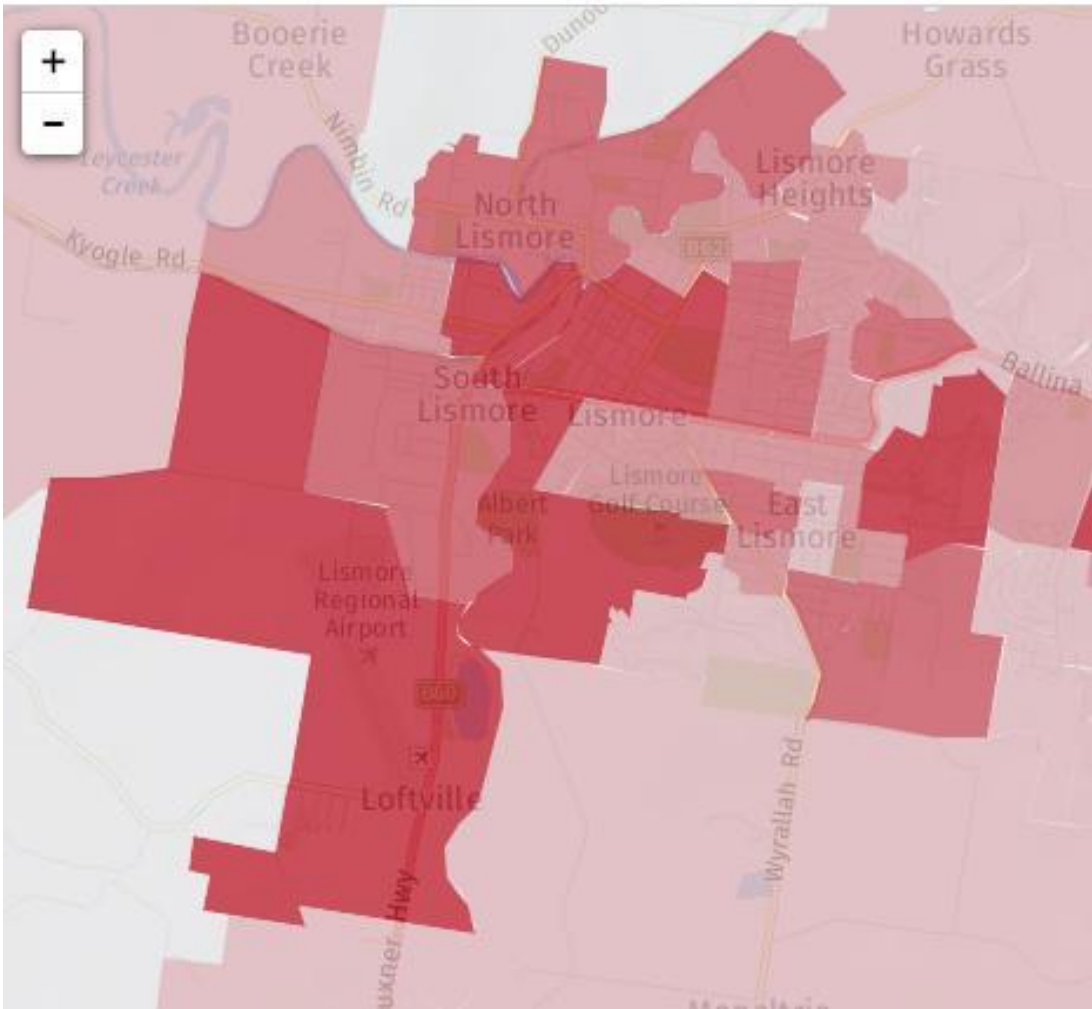
Region wide impact



Spatial Injustice



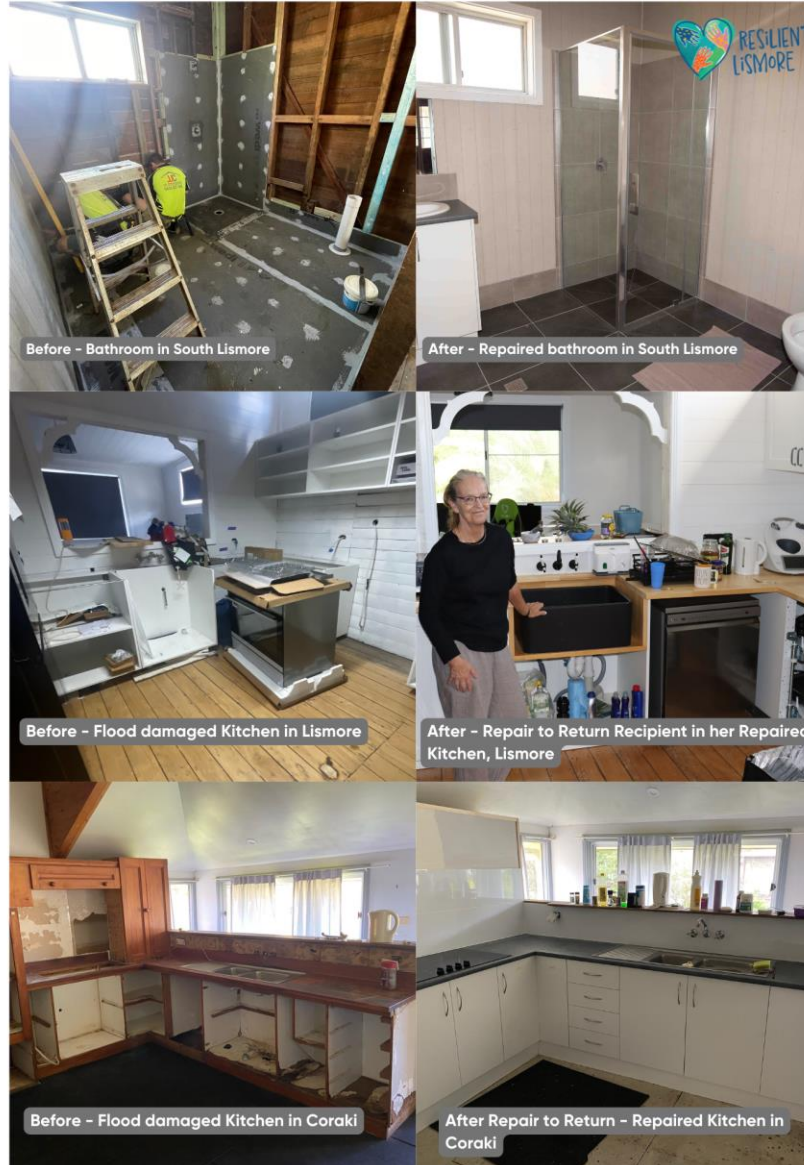
Lismore City, Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, 2016,



What is Repair to Return?



- ♥ **Partial / Essential Property Repair**
- ♥ **Help those that need help most first**
- ♥ **Listen & follow their lead**
- ♥ **Work at their pace & be flexible**
- ♥ **Encourage participation**
- ♥ **Repair what's essential & what matters**
stairs, bathrooms, kitchens, doors, windows, fences
- ♥ **Provide wrap around support**



**850+
homes**

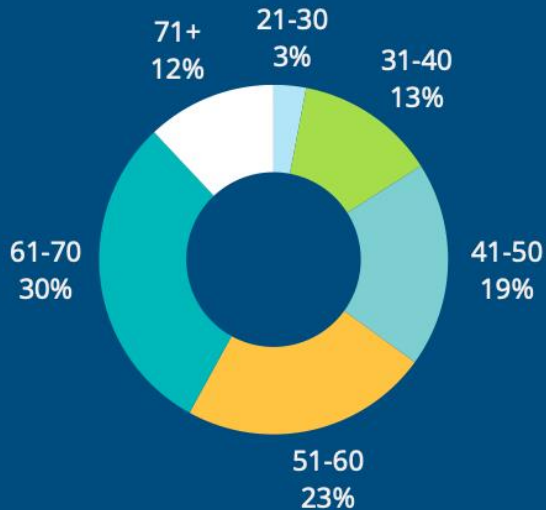
7 LGAs

**13 Towns &
Villages**

**4.5
years**

Meet the participants

Age in Years



Employment

NB: Respondents could select more than one option.



Living Arrangements at Baseline

-  **56%** Living in flood affected home
-  **20%** Living on property in temporary shelter
-  **12%** Living off property in temporary or informal accommodation
-  **12%** Different housing situation



23%

Have a chronic
or terminal
illness



36%

Live by
themselves



29%

Live with a
disability

Equity-driven triage



Everyone gets the same



Who has the greatest barriers to recovery, and the least capacity to manage it themselves?



Means tested support



What are the secondary effects of prioritising this household?



Recovery Domains



The Built Environment

The Home as Infrastructure

Scope works

Coordinate trades

Install bathroom

Fix kitchen

Close job

The Social Environment

The Person independent of the Home

Reduce distress

Restore dignity

Rebuild agency

Strengthen connection

Renew hope

What if these are not separate streams?

A Social Work Approach to Property Repair



Property Repair as a Wellbeing and Recovery Enabler

Assess Property

Reduce distress

Scope works

Rebuild agency

Coordinate trades

Restore dignity

Install bathroom & fix kitchen

Strengthen connection

Close job

Renew hope & build resilience



Housing quality is a wellbeing lever



"Resilient Lismore has restored my home to a point now that I am able to live here at ease rather than in my campervan. It has given me a new love of Lismore and its people. I feel much more grounded, as opposed to wanting to run away constantly."

**Safe, dignified
home**



**Control &
agency**

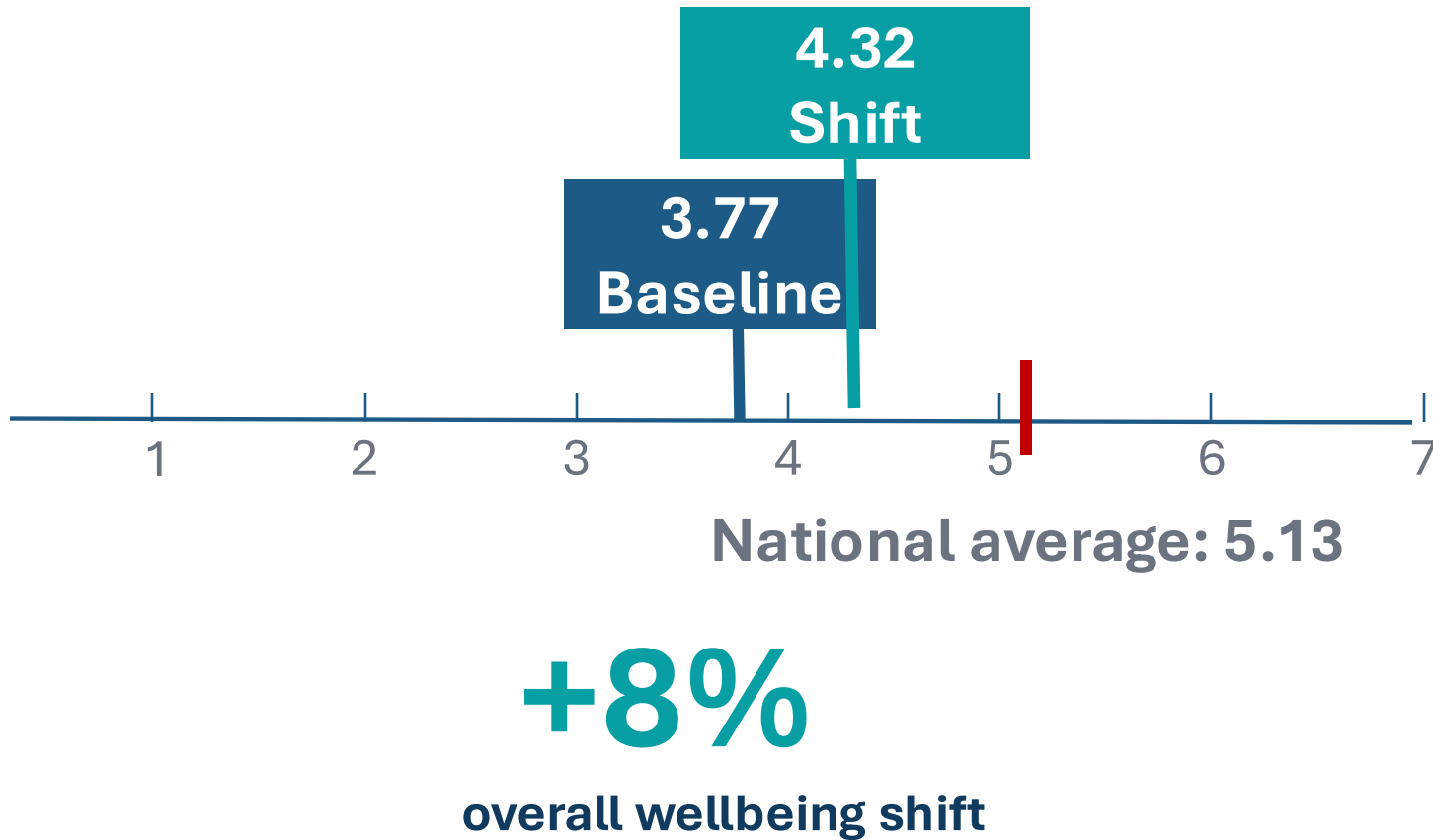


**Hope &
connection**



Wellbeing

Wellbeing increased by 8%



What else shifted?



Access to Safe and Secure Homes

14% Increase in **access to a safe and hygienic bathroom**

12% Increase in feeling that **one's home is meeting their needs**

11% Increase in **access to a safe and hygienic kitchen**

Community Connection

9% Increase in **feeling proud of where one lives**

9% Increase in **opportunities to participate in community activities**

8% Increase in **believing community is celebrated where one lives**

Hope for the Future

10% Reduction in **frequency of feeling anxious**

9% Reduction in **frequency of feeling stressed or overwhelmed**

7% Increase in **ability to focus on positive things in life**

Agency in Recovery

11% Increase in **knowing who to speak to when one needs help with their recovery**

7% Increase in **having the skills to manage one's rebuild and recovery process**

The intervention is not just the repair



Listen



Build trust



Understand
the household



Repair what
matters



Navigate
systems



Support
decisions



Restore agency

"Resilient Lismore has helped many families in their rebuild for internal walls, linking them into support services, provided hot water systems, holding information sessions and community gathering events. Our South Lismore community is recovering with Resilient Lismore's support. Their assistance enables building back better in our flood zone, it enables community hope for a future to remain here and reunite back into our community."



Repair creates the entry point. Relationship creates the conditions for trust

Place-based and Community-led



With Thanks To

Supported by



and many more...

Stakeholder Survey – Independent Evaluation 2024 Resilient Lismore Summary Impact Report



96%
Agree

Resilient Lismore has had a positive impact in the Northern Rivers



94%
Agree

Resilient Lismore provides an essential service to the Northern Rivers community



94%
Agree

Resilient Lismore has played a key role in building networks for disaster recovery and community resilience in the Northern Rivers

Transferable lessons for disaster recovery practice



Treat housing as a wellbeing intervention

Measure what changes in people's lives, not only the number of completed repairs.



Fund relationships, not just outputs

Time spent listening, coordinating and navigating systems is part of the intervention.



Design for agency

Recovery should increase people's capacity to make informed decisions.



Apply an equity lens

Prioritise households facing the greatest barriers to self-directed recovery.



Transferable lessons for disaster recovery practice



IDENTIFY, ENABLE AND
INVEST IN
PLACE-BASED,
COMMUNITY-LED
RECOVERY AND
RESILIENCE



2026



RESILIENT LISMORE

Disaster Ready Together

16 & 17th
SEPTEMBER 2026

SUMMIT
NORTHERN RIVERS

QUAD
LISMORE

**Summit tickets
now live!**



This project has received funding from the Australian Government and the NSW Government.

We acknowledge the Widjabul Wia-bal People of Bundjalung Jagun (Country) Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which this Summit takes place.

Get in touch

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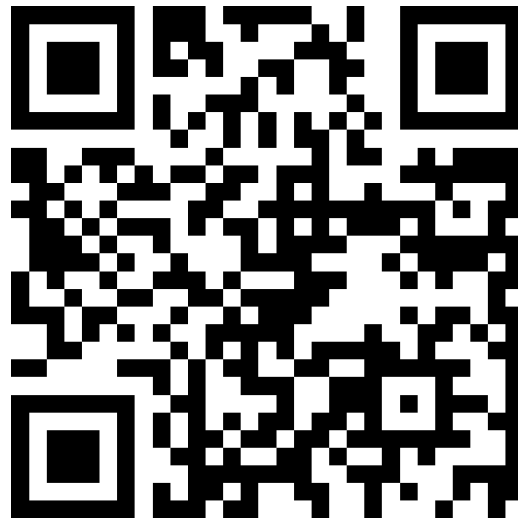
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Sunflower Room

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The Sunflower Room is a sensory-friendly space at the conference, offering delegates with hidden disabilities a place to help rest, regulate and reset.

Please see a staff member at the registration desk if you need assistance finding it.





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