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Australian Disaster
Resilience Conference

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Collaboratively supporting healthy childhood development, wellbeing and resilience in disaster settings: Thriving kids in disasters

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Australian Government
National Emergency
Management Agency



Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the places where we live and work, and their continuing connection to land and sea, kin, culture and community.

We pay respect to Elders past and present, and to First Nations colleagues.

We acknowledge the resilience, determination, leadership, generosity and innovation of First Nations peoples, and we recognise the value inherent in Indigenous ways of 'knowing, being and doing'.





‘The climate crisis is not just changing the planet, it is changing childhoods.’

UNICEF (2023)

‘Climate change is already affecting the environments where young children live, grow, play, and learn.’

Harvard Centre of the Developing Child (2025)

What kids tell us

When we create the conditions to hear them

***“Big clouds, rainy ...
flood?”***

2yo girl, ECEC setting, Qld

***“My friend isn’t here, is he
safe?”***

4yo boy, ECEC setting, NSW

***“Sometimes at the school the air con breaks
down ... We can’t open windows because they’re
boarded up. Then sometimes the bubblers don’t
work.”***

High school student, Kowanyama

***“We live in a container house. It’s too hot to
do anything, so we go outside. It’s too hot
to concentrate or do homework. I do that at
school.”***

Primary school student, Western Downs

The Bigger Picture

Children are disproportionately affected by disasters – yet their wellbeing is not consistently prioritised in disaster systems

90%

of brain architecture is built by age 6, quadrupling in size – disaster disrupts this

Harvard Center on the Developing Child

4×

as many heatwaves for a child born in 2020 vs. 1960, plus 3× droughts, 1.5× bushfires

QKP / Deloitte-UNICEF

42%

less likely to finish Year 12 for children who've experienced disaster

Deloitte Access Economics / UNICEF Aus

1 in 5

children develop PTSD after a disaster; most recover with the right support

Emerging Minds



Compounding disasters and climate risk



Children have unique needs before, during and after disasters



Systems are not yet consistently focused on children as a unique stakeholder

Thriving Kids in Disasters (TKiD) Alliance is...

Working together to support the healthy development, wellbeing, and resilience of children in disaster management settings in Queensland



TKiD Origins



*Meilla, 46, observes floodwaters
near her home in Cairns, wet season 2024*

Queensland Kids Partnership & TKiD

From a commissioned project to a cross-sector Alliance



Queensland Kids Partnership (QKP)

Weaving systems together for kids – we're a growing partnership of people and organisations committed to every young Queenslander thriving. We bring people together to shift the mindsets and systems that impact on children's healthy development and wellbeing.

Thriving Kids in Disasters (TKiD)

An initiative of QKP that has evolved into a cross-sector Alliance – shifting mindsets, practices, systems and outcomes for infants, children, and young people in extreme weather and disasters across the state.

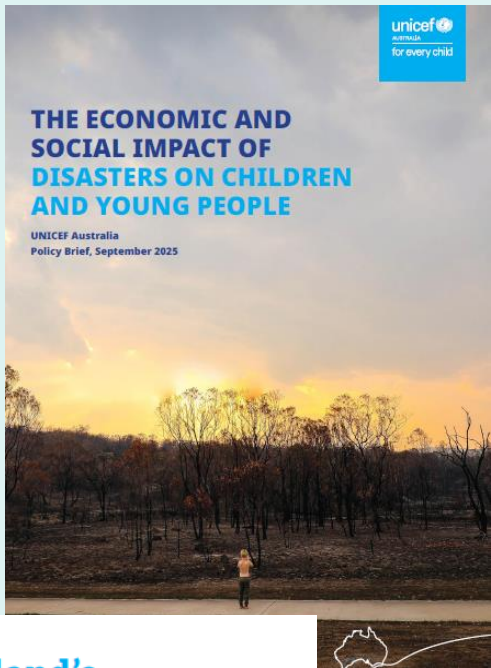
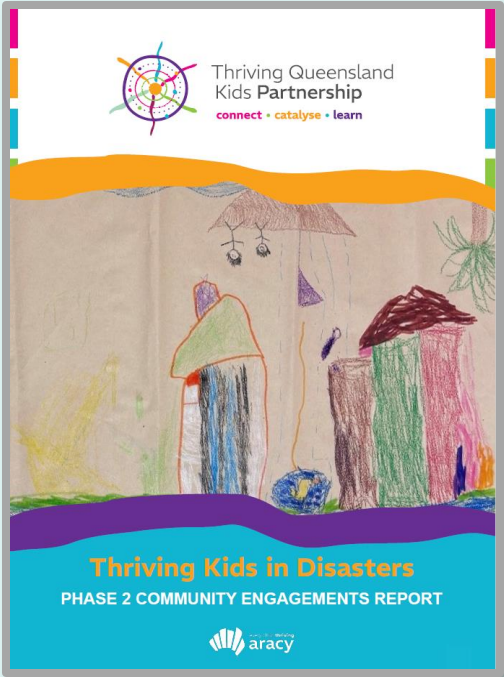


Foundational Work

Commissioned by the John Villiers Trust

- Built the evidence base and relationships across child centred and disaster management systems in Queensland
- Evolved into an ongoing Alliance
- Created the conditions to listen to kids' experiences of disasters
- Informed development of the TKiD Action and Investment Plan
- Provides a shared roadmap for coordinated systems-level action, investment and accountability

TKiD Evidence



Queensland's Thriving Kids in Disasters Action and Investment Plan 2025 remains the most comprehensive, system-level, child-centred plan within Australia.

How the Alliance works



Our Shared System-Level Priorities



Recognition

Strengthening recognition of infant, child, youth and family wellbeing as a core disaster management priority



Connectivity

Improving connectivity across child, youth, family and disaster management systems to address complex, cross-system challenges



Influence

Influencing practice, investment and policy to better support children impacted by compounding disasters and extreme weather



Southern Downs Bushfire Recovery review
July 2026



Winton Community Meeting
November 2025

Our Approach: Scaling Deep

Changing the assumptions, relationships and decision-making practices that shape systems



Recognition: Mindsets

Shifting assumptions about how disasters and extreme weather affect children's development and wellbeing and how they can be involved in and supported through PPRR activities



Connectivity: Relationships

Building trust and connection across sectors and communities



Influence: Embedded Practice

Development and wellbeing of infants, children and young people naturally considered – in plans, briefings, investment

Collaboration in Action



TKiD In Action

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Example 01

PCYC Emergency Services Cadets PFA Training



PCYC Youth Cadets



With funding from



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHXneqmpBPI>

Example 02

Kids & Disasters coaching in Central West Qld

Nov 2025– Feb 2026 Coaches/ capability champion content development happening involving QKP, Michelle Roberts, and Nikki Deighton



Oct 2025
RAPAD-OB-QKP
roadshow through five
LGAs
Meetings with local
DM systems and
community dinners



Feb 2026
Contract bw OBF and
QKP signed
Pre-planning for roll
out undertaken by
OBF and QKP

April – Aug 2026
Fortnightly group
learning
Fortnightly 1:1
coaching
On the ground applied
learning in community

Feb 2025
OBF initiated idea with
QKP and TKiD Alliance
as a fit for purpose
way of delivering
practical, tailored
workforce
development @
organisational level

Dec 2025
OBF and QKP
codesign proposal
Proposal presented to
and signed off by
RAPAD



With funding from:



A joint initiative of



Example 03

Collective Learning In Action



What happened

Created a space to learn by doing, bringing together communities, organisations and sectors to work on real world challenges.



How we worked together

By testing and learning from initiatives in the Action & Investment Plan

- *Emerging Minds Workforce Training.*
- *CARE Communication Kit for frontline responders*
- *Qld Gov Flood Resilient Schools*
- *Kowanyama & the disaster orientation for new people to town*



What changed

Connecting local practice with research, policy and evidence.
Using collective intelligence of the Alliance

What we are building together ...



Better connected, capable and confident systems involved in disaster management in Queensland



A stronger evidence base for action



Better informed, involved, and confident kids, families and local communities across Queensland



Future generations of disaster resilience



The foundations for long-term systems change

Lessons Learned

Reflections from the TKiD journey so far



Partnerships across sectors can enable real change

When we collaborate deliberately across areas of experience and expertise, we create conditions for deeper, more sustainable systems change.



Evidence and lived experience together

The richest insights emerge when evidence and lived experience come together highlighting strengths and gaps, transforming what we know about kids and disasters into a deeper understanding of where action is needed most.



System shift takes time and is iterative work

Meaningful systems change happens incrementally, built through relationships, trust, collaborating, experimenting, learning and long-term commitment



Children thrive when caregivers are supported

Infants, children and young people experience disasters through relationships. When caregivers are supported, kids are better able to cope, recover and thrive.



**Queensland Kids
Partnership**



Thank you

Thriving Kids In Disasters

Get in touch!

Alisha –

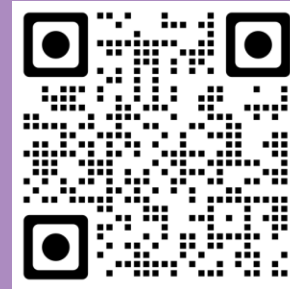
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