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Australian Disaster
Resilience Conference

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Practicing the Transformational Community Resilience Mindset Through Partnerships

Flood to Flourish

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Australian Government
National Emergency
Management Agency



Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience





Acknowledgement of Country

We pay our respects to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people and to their Elders past, present and emerging. We extend this to all First Nations people gathered here today.

We also acknowledge and pay respects to the Traditional Owners of the lands on which Flood to Flourish is working, the Bundjalung, Gunaikurnai and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples.



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Broad agreement on the need for “community resilience”

We want to ensure our community remains safe by adapting and preparing for future flood events ... The ability to be resilient is now seen as one of the key attributes of a sustainable city (Brisbane City Council, 2023, p.3).

Our vision includes the term ‘resilient’ ... Developing greater flood resilience can improve community safety, and the liveability and sustainability of the region (Melbourne Water Corporation, 2021, p.6).

The key themes reflect the importance of **involving people in the development and implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies**, and ensuring their needs and perspectives are considered. This includes a focus on building social capital, **community resilience** and empowering individuals to take action to reduce their own risk, as well as promoting **a more inclusive decision making approach** that considers the needs of diverse groups, including First Nations people, youth, people with disability, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Second National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction, Australian Government, 2023).

*Our shared vision [is] residents, business, **community groups and governments working together** to better manage flood risk and strengthen the resilience of our communities (Queensland Reconstruction Authority, 2019, p.2)*

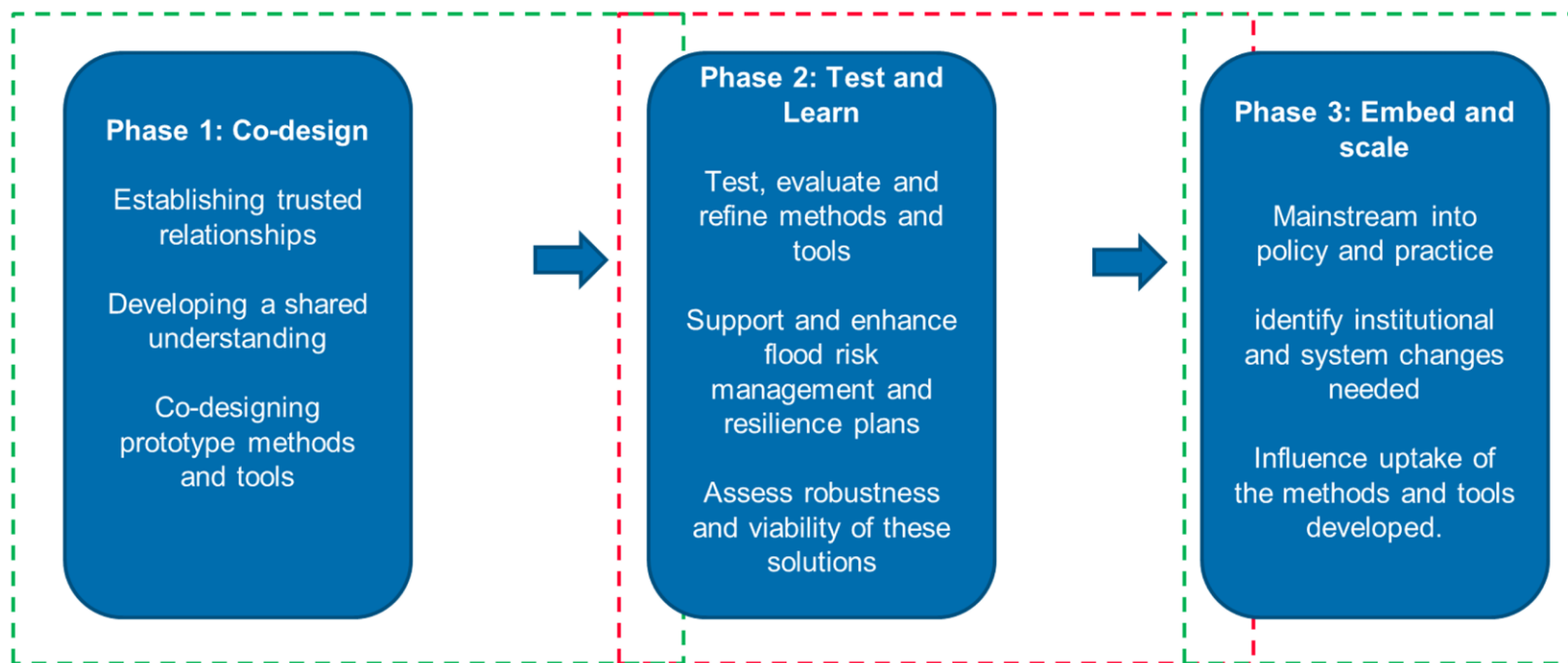
*[The] Strategy aims to reduce flood risk to life, property and social amenity ... It is working to **improve community resilience and prepare** for the impacts of climate change on flood risk (NSW Government, 2021, p.1).*



Phase 1 partners:

Phase 2 partners:

Flood to Flourish



We are here





Same system, three local contexts

Tweed Shire, NSW

Many small townships across a large shire

- Frequent, whole-of-community flooding, high awareness
- Acute impacts on essential services (power, roads, etc)
- Multiple established resilience groups with high demand for community engagement

Maribyrnong, Vic

Inner metropolitan Melbourne

- Low flood risk literacy, from less frequent flooding
- Insurance, retrofitting and flood resilience design key issues
- Emerging community resilience groups with desire for greater involvement, facing capacity challenges

Traralgon, Vic

Large regional town, the centre of the Latrobe Valley

- Fast onset flooding in concentrated area
- Key concerns about warnings and accessibility of technical information
- Sporting clubs, Landcare and other groups starting to engage in flood resilience

- Community capacity shows up whether or not it is planned for. Community members are taking action where they can.
- Technical flood knowledge exists, but not always in a way people can use.
- Information tends to move one way, from authorities to communities.
- Those most exposed are often those least resourced to prepare and least likely to be reached.
- Community-institutional relationships are based on individual connections, which have to reset when someone moves on.



Our system is not set up for community resilience practice

Community resilience groups

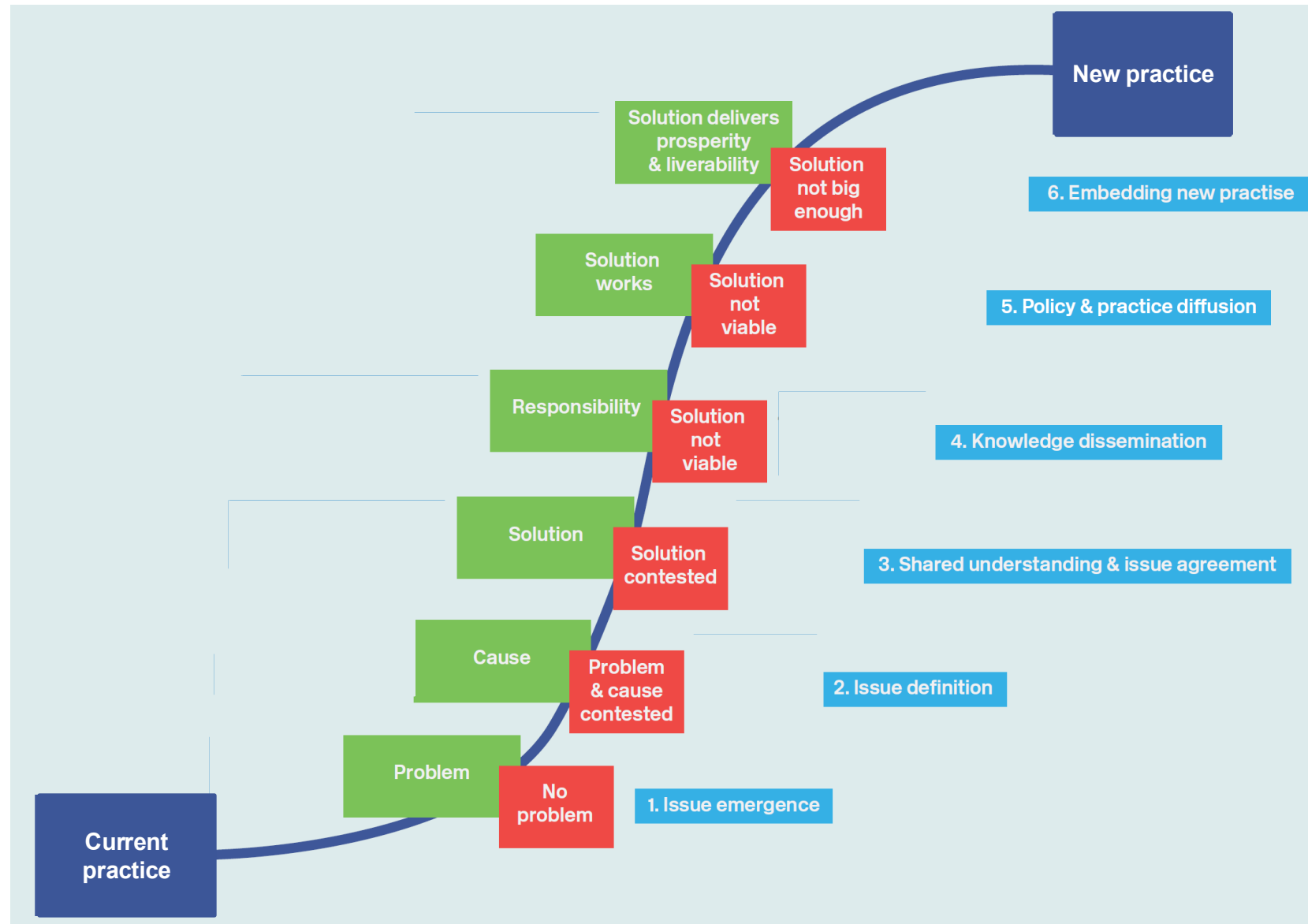
- Don't have a seat at the table
- Are locked out of access to resources
- Are struggling with accreditation and insurance requirements
- Can't access funding
- Achievements are based on personal relationships
- Face volunteer burnout and consultation fatigue

Governments and agencies

- Don't have a clear mandate
- Face fragmented roles and responsibilities
- Lack budget for engagement
- Funding is post-disaster and short-term
- Individuals feel exposed

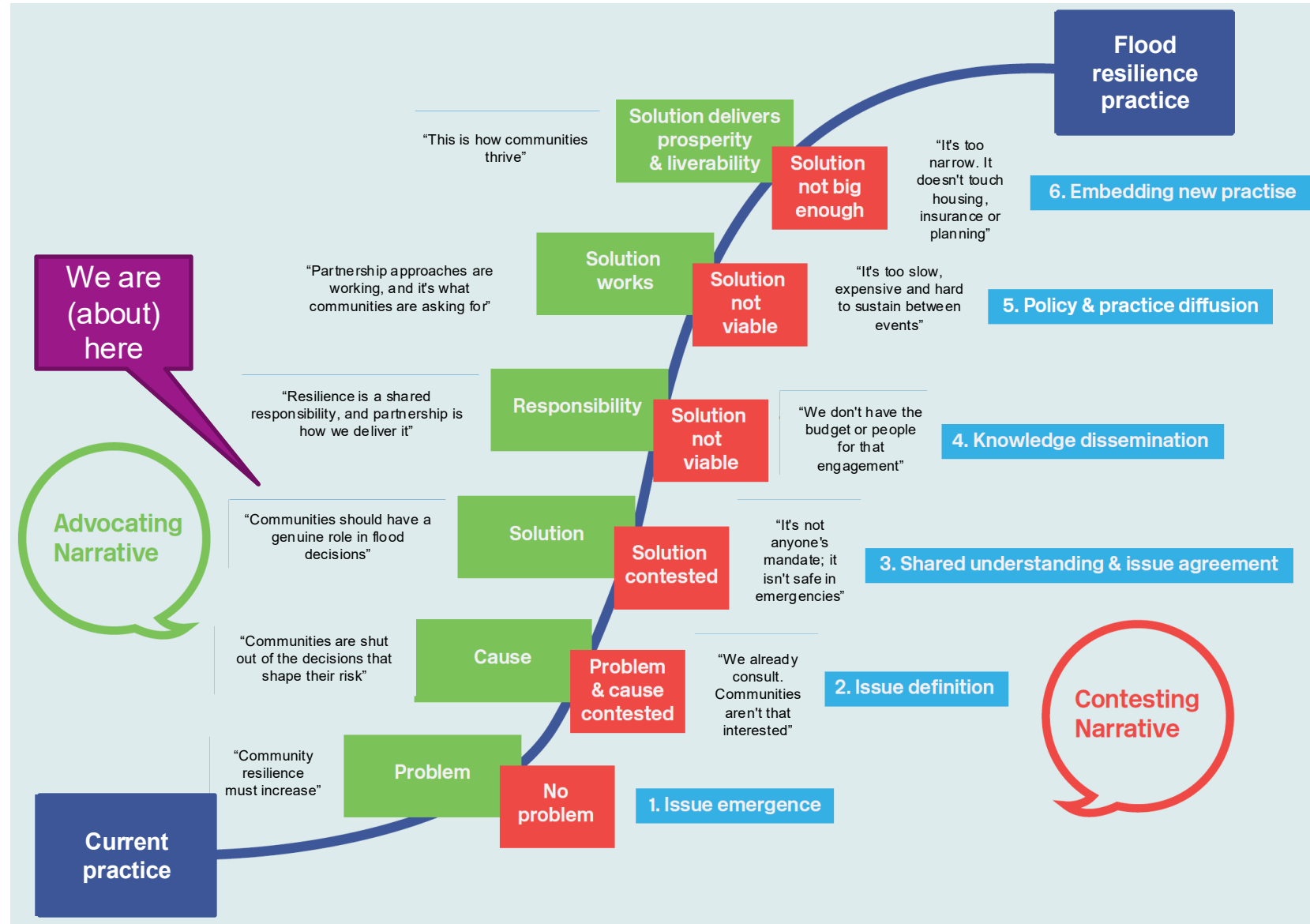


Why this is hard





Why this is hard



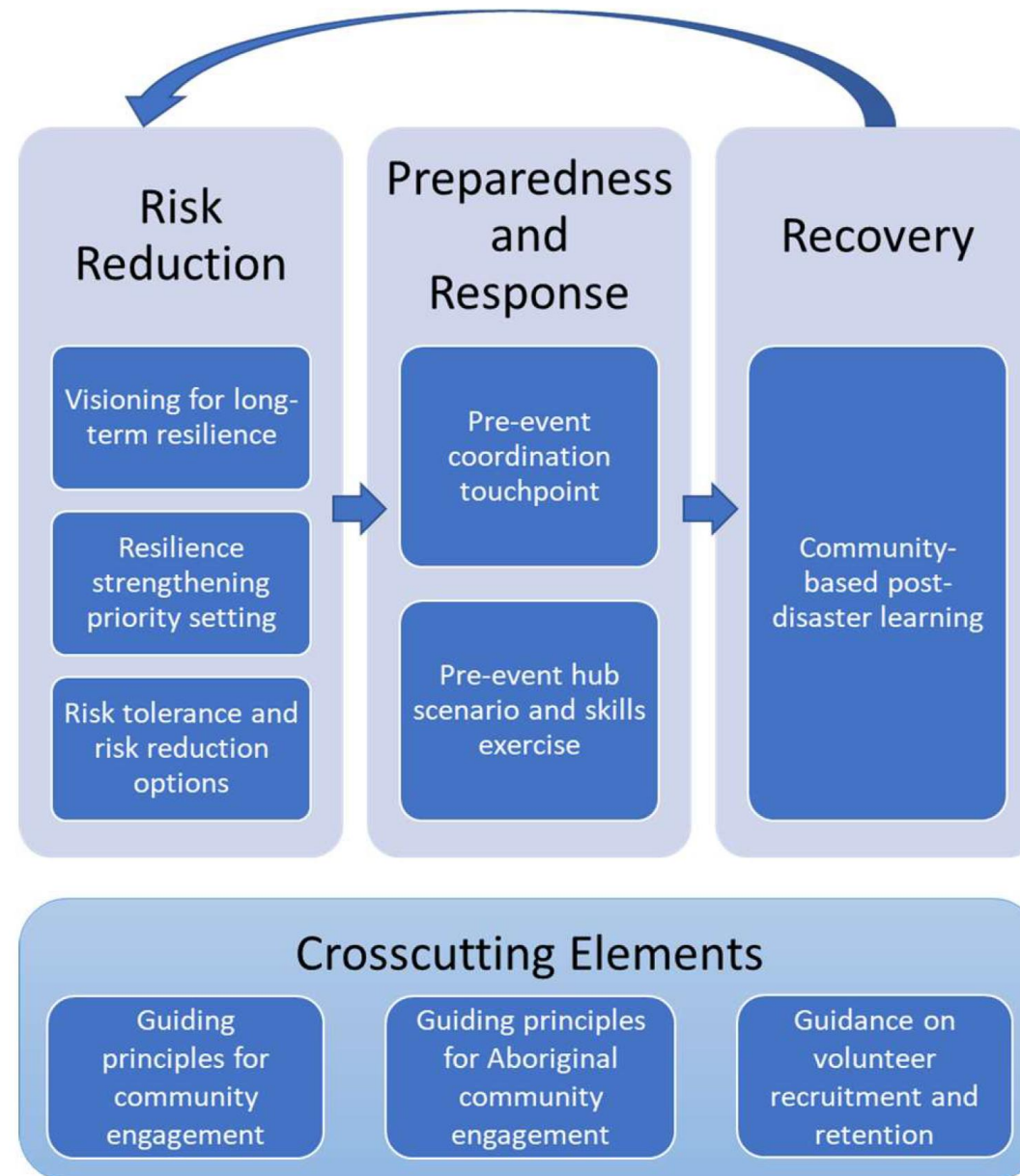


Towards embedding solutions



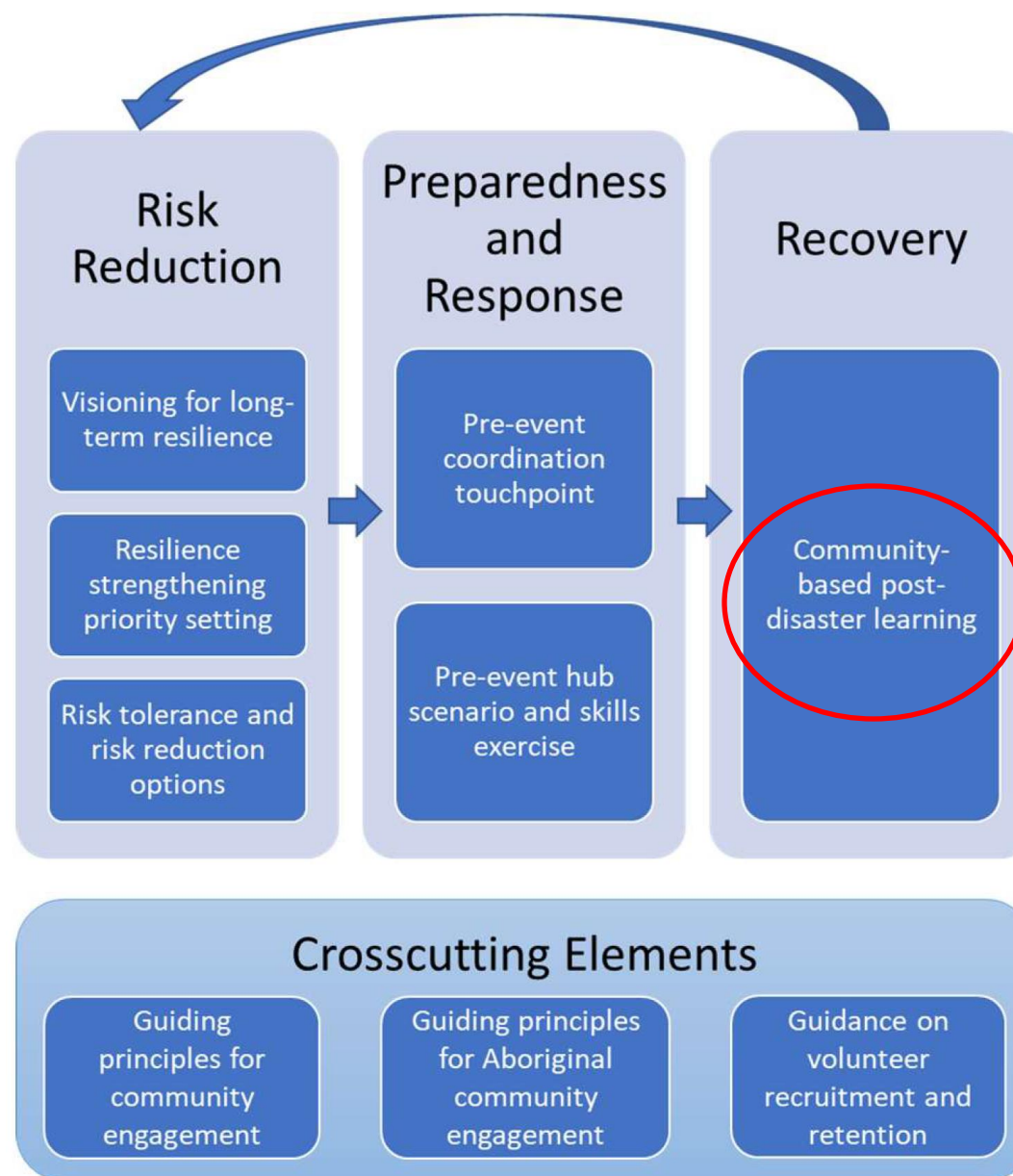


Co- designing community resilience practice





Tool example: Learning together after floods





Researchers need to change our mindsets too

"There seems to be a lot more taking from community than giving. Communities are being consulted a lot and surveyed a lot. At some point the community is going to ask, 'What's in this for me?' If people don't see anything changing, they'll stop participating."

- Take off the expert hat
 - More facilitation, less 'education'
 - Be an intermediary, amplify community voices
 - Centre community impact, not research outputs
- Build funding for community costs and support into research proposals



Continuing the transition

"We've got community groups who already know their neighbourhoods incredibly well. They're already supporting people before, during and after floods. The question is how we better connect that with the formal system."

"I think everybody genuinely wants to do the right thing. The people working across council, [floodplain management and emergency services] are incredibly committed. The challenge isn't a lack of goodwill; it's trying to make all of these different parts of the system work together."



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