Vulnerable Sections of Society

(an emergency management perspective)

Report Prepared for:

National Emergency Management Projects

Emergency Management Policy Branch

National Security Resilience Policy Division

Attorney-General's Department

3-5 National Circuit Barton ACT 2600

T: 02 6141 3089 E: www.ag.gov.au

Report Prepared By:

Vulnerable Sections of Society Working Group

Community Engagement Subcommittee

Australian and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Common abbreviations (acronyms) used throughout this report include:

AEMI	Australian Emergency Management Institute
AGD	Attorney-General's Department
ANZEMC	Australia New Zealand Emergency Management Committee
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CESC	Community Engagement Sub-Committee
CSO	Community Service Organisation
NEMP	National Emergency Management Project
NDRP	Natural Disaster Resilience Program
NSDR	National Strategy for Disaster Resilience
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
LCCSC	Law, Crime and Community Safety Council
LGA	Local Government Area
VSS	Vulnerable Sections of Society

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Working Group would like to acknowledge the Attorney-General's Department for funding the project under the 2014-15 National Emergency Management Projects (NEMP) grant program.

Thank you to all parties who assisted in hosting, organising and contributing to the success of the Vulnerable Sections of Society (VSS) National Workshop. Particular thanks go to the staff of the Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI) for their coordination and professionalism; Dudley McArdle who facilitated the workshop bringing extensive experience from the Emergency Management sector and contributing to the workshop recommendations; and Andrea Bullus from Select Write the scribe who produced the VSS workshop proceedings.

This report draws on a wide range of data provided by the Australia and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) identified groups across all levels of government, non-government agencies with responsibility for emergency management and the not-for-profit sectors. Thank you to all the subject matter experts from within the response, recovery and community sectors who assisted in the development of the register of initiatives.

Our grateful thanks go to all the VSS Workshop participants who shared their time, thoughts, expertise and experiences. These contributions were integral in achieving the outputs of the VSS workshop and are captured throughout this report.

We are grateful to each one of you for your commitment to ensuring the findings of the workshop contribute to the scope of the project, including:

> *To highlight areas of best practice and identify potential gaps for consideration of progress either at a jurisdictional level or those that require a national focus[1]*

The Working Group would also like to acknowledge the work of Tracey McGregor, Project Officer from January 2015–May 2015 and Ben Brungs, Project Officer, May 2015– July 2015 for their work in supporting the Working Group and shaping this report.

The opinions, comments and/or analysis expressed in this document are those of the Working Group and do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth and/or State and Territory departments and cannot be taken in any way as expressions of government policy.

Janelle Wheatley, Chair
Community Services Directorate, ACT Government
Vulnerable sections of Society Working Group
July 2015

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[1] Vulnerable Sections of Society Project Report (pg1)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the 2014-15 National Emergency Management Program, the Community Engagement Sub-Committee (CESC) received a grant to establish a baseline (as requested by ANZEMC) in relation to vulnerable communities in emergency management. That is, a comprehensive starting point to gain a greater understanding of what work/initiatives are already being undertaken across the States and Territories thereby limiting future duplication and building on existing successful program models.

The Vulnerable Sections of Society Working Group (a working group of nominated CESC members) undertook this project over the last 12 months cumulating in this report.

The findings of the project have been drawn from a literature review, the National Workshop held in March 2015 and jurisdictional input to the national stocktake.

The findings of this report draw the conclusion that although there has been significant investment in a range of initiatives targeting those in the community who are most vulnerable, the emergency management sector needs to rethink the way in which it approaches this issue whilst gaining an appreciation and understanding of the complexities and factors that lead to vulnerability.

The findings considered the role of the community services sector and how best to integrate community service organisations into emergency management planning and preparedness through the development of active partnerships. The findings further demonstrate that the value of community service organisations is not fully recognised and the sector is an underutilised resource that should be leveraged (acknowledging this requires resourcing). Community service organisations are at the forefront of working directly with individuals/families in crisis on a day to day basis and bring to the table a range of expertise to assist in building resilience where there is vulnerability.

In moving forward, there is a need, at both a national and jurisdictional level to formally acknowledge and define vulnerability (in an emergency management context) which recognises the complexity of the issue and the factors leading to vulnerability. A strengths based approach to planning and responding to the needs of people with vulnerabilities will enhance self reliance and social capacity, thereby increasing individual, organisational and community resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations aim to enhance the capabilities of the emergency management sector to better understand and support building the resilience of people with vulnerabilities.

Recommendation 1:	**Register of Initiatives** That the CESC consider the potential future use of the Register (as a tool), including the ongoing maintenance, resource and funding requirements associated with maintaining the Register.
Recommendation 2:	That ANZEMC note the importance of developing qualitative indicators for future emergency management grant programs (that align with key priority outcomes of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.) to assist in informing program evaluation.
Recommendation 3:	**Development of a National Policy Position Statement (incorporating an agreed national definition of vulnerability)** That ANZEMC consider developing a National Policy Position Statement acknowledging that despite the best efforts of agencies and communities to build resilience, for people with vulnerabilities, their needs before, during and following an emergency event will require additional planning and support. The Policy Statement could encompass: • A nationally agreed definition of vulnerability: • An understanding of factors that increase vulnerability; • Planning considerations; • Communication and engagement strategies; and • Importance of strong partnerships between emergency management agencies and community service.
Recommendation 4:	**That ANZEMC agree that CSOs are essential partners in building resilience in vulnerable communities and require the support and resourcing of Government to integrate disaster resilience into their core business.** That ANZEMC recognise the role Community Service Organisations undertake in supporting people with vulnerabilities facing everyday adversity and in times of crisis. Further, that CSO's: • Have the capacity to help prepare vulnerable people for emergencies; and • Play an essential role in disaster planning, relief and recovery.
Recommendation 5:	**Development of a companion document on vulnerability in an emergency management context.**

	That ANZEMC support the development of a companion document to the existing Emergency Management Handbook series that provides guidance to emergency management agencies in understanding the complexities of vulnerability with the aims of improving outcomes for people with vulnerabilities who have been affected by a disaster.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to adopt a whole-of-nation resilience-based approach to disaster management. This agreement led to the development of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR), which was adopted by COAG on 13 February 2011.

In July 2013, the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council (LCCSC), then known as the Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management, endorsed *'improving the resilience of vulnerable sections of society, including Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, children and youth, the elderly and people with disability'* as one of the three future priorities for the implementation of the NSDR. This priority recognised a national, coordinated and cooperative effort was needed to enhance the capacity of people with vulnerabilities to withstand and recover from emergencies and disasters.

To help address this priority, the Vulnerable Sections of Society Project was endorsed through the 2014/15 National Emergency Management Project grants funding program.

The following governance structure was established for the project:

- Project Sponsor: Community Engagement Subcommittee (CESC)
- Project delegate: Vulnerable Sections of Society Working Group Chair
- Project team: Vulnerable Sections of Society Working Group

1.2 Project aim

The objective of this project was to establish a baseline (as requested by ANZEMC) in relation to vulnerable communities in emergency management, that is a comprehensive starting point to gain a greater understanding of what work/initiatives are already being undertaken across the States and Territories so that future work and gap analysis may be performed to limit duplication and build on successful program models.

To achieve this, the Vulnerable Sections of Society Project had three identified outputs. These were:

1. A national Stocktake of initiatives involving the ANZEMC identified groups across all levels of government, non-government agencies with responsibility for emergency management and the not for profit sector, universities and academic sectors.

2. A national workshop of agencies currently involved in this space convened to discuss the research, programs and initiatives that are being undertaken in Australia to address vulnerable sections of society and disaster resilience strategies.

3. A register of initiatives and a report into the current status of initiatives in dealing with vulnerable sections of the community during disaster phases will be produced, including a gap analysis.

1.3 Project Scope:

The following were in scope:

- The report will highlight areas of best practice and identify potential gaps for consideration of progress either at a jurisdictional level or those that require a national focus.
- This project will consider the benefits of linking the project report to the Emergency Management Handbook series as a mechanism for ensuring regular audits/updates occur.
- This project will consider recommendations for maintaining and updating of the stocktake.

The following was out of scope:

- The project will not produce a guide/procedure on working with vulnerable sections of the community.
- The project will not be responsible for the ongoing maintenance/review of the stocktake.

1.4 Audience

This Report has been prepared for the ANZEMC represented by the CESC.

2. PROJECT METHODOLOGY

2.1 Project Milestones

The VSS Project involved three key phases:

Phase 1: National Stocktake

This phase involved the development of a national stocktake of initiatives that target the ANZEMC identified vulnerable groups. The output of the national stocktake is the Register of Initiatives (Register). The Register includes initiatives across all levels of government, non-government agencies with responsibility for emergency management and the not for profit sector. The Register of Initiatives is discussed in Section 3.

Phase 2: National Workshop

The National Workshop, held in March 2015 at the Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI), Mount Macedon, was attended by senior emergency management professionals from response, recovery and community agencies. All jurisdictions attended with the exception of Northern Territory who was otherwise engaged with a tropical cyclone. A full list of workshop attendees is at **Appendix A.**

The purpose of the National Workshop was to:

- Use the Register of Initiatives to discuss the research, programs and projects being undertaken in Australia to address disaster resilience and emergency management for people with vulnerabilities.
- Develop the evidence base to inform ANZEMC decision making around issues of emergency management of people with vulnerabilities.
- Identify best practice, gaps and focus areas for CESC to improve emergency management for people with vulnerabilities that doesn't duplicate work that has already occurred.
- Identify how CESC can best address these focus areas from a national perspective (eg. guidelines, principles, targeted communication strategies and frameworks).

Phase 3: Final Report

This Report has been developed by the Vulnerable Sections of Society Working Group of the Community Engagement Sub-committee. It has been informed by the stocktake, the National Workshop, Jurisdictional literature, as well as incorporating themes from the Community Engagement Framework.

3.   REGISTER OF INITIATIVES

3.1   Register Aims

The aims of the Register were to:

- Inform the Vulnerable Sections of Society Workshop discussions;
- Facilitate sharing of information across jurisdictions; and
- Inform Project Report recommendations.

3.2   Stocktake process

The development of the Stocktake was a three stage process:

1. Establish the baseline for data collection;
2. Source existing resources/literature; and
3. Seek jurisdictional input.

The stocktake template parameters considerations included:

- Funding source for initiatives;
- Alignment with NSDR key priorities;
- Alignment with Planning/Preparedness/Response/Recovery phases of disaster management;
- Vulnerable groups targeted;
- Evaluation of initiatives;
- Extent of community engagement; and
- Timeline parameters (initiatives captured were from 2010 onwards).

The initial populating of the stocktake drew from the following resources/literature:

- ANZEMC Agenda Item Paper – October 2013;
- Social Vulnerability Stocktake – 2012;
- Resilient Australia Awards – 2012;
- NEMP Funding Applications – 2010/2011 through to 2104/2015;
- NDRP funding applications;
- AEMI – samples of printed material collected over the last 10 years;
- Referencing and researching from documents and reports; and
- Australian Journal of Emergency Management articles.

The final stage in the development of the Stocktake relied on input from individual jurisdictions. Working Group members were tasked with the responsibility of reviewing existing Stocktake data for accuracy and providing further examples of current initiatives from within their jurisdiction.

Jurisdictional coordinators (CESC members) were provided with a letter of introduction to forward to key stakeholders (government, LGA's, community organisations) within their jurisdiction to seek input to the Stocktake.

To ensure the Stocktake was as comprehensive as possible, the Working Group also wrote to other relevant ANZEMC Sub-Committees (Recovery Sub-Committee and Social Recovery Reference Group) to further disseminate and populate the stocktake template.

Despite approaches made to the academic sector for input to the Stocktake, no information was forthcoming. However, with the assistance of the Jurisdictional coordinators and the Australian Government CESC representatives in sourcing information, the Working Group is satisfied that the initiatives compiled for this project provide a reasonable representation of work occurring in this space.

The Working Group acknowledges that while the Stocktake provides a good sample of current initiatives with a focus on people with vulnerabilities, it should not be viewed as an exhaustive account of all activities that have been undertaken for this target group. The Stocktake should be seen as an indicative summary of initiatives/projects across jurisdictions. It is highly likely that there are a range of additional initiatives that are being undertaken which align with this project's target group which are not included in the Stocktake.

3.3   Compilation of the Register of Initiatives

Information gathered during the Stocktake was used to produce the Register of Initiatives (Register), which contains information on more than 280 initiatives Australia wide. It is thought to be the first time a stocktake of this kind has been undertaken for this target group. Similar to the National Stocktake under the auspices of the "Keeping our Mob Safe Strategy", the benefit of such a Register and its ability to provide decision makers with an invaluable insight into the current status of initiatives for people with vulnerabilities in an emergency context is to be commended. The benefits of compiling this information will provide a useful tool to inform future policy development, limit duplication, guide funding priorities and build on successful program models.

The Register demonstrates (through the volume of initiatives undertaken in the last five years) that there has been considerable work undertaken in emergency services targeting improved outcomes for people with vulnerabilities both before and after disasters. The Register enables the sharing of this information both within and across jurisdictions and at a national level to assist in understanding, learning and leveraging off initiatives that have been implemented in the community. Feedback on the Register from workshop participants demonstrated there was merit in maintaining a database of initiatives, and that most found it to be a useful tool but questioned the need for it to be a public document. A sample of initiatives from the Register is at Section 4 of the Report.

To enable the Register to perform to its full potential, it clearly needs to be in a format that is accessible and easy to maintain. The initial register was produced in an Excel format and while this was useful for compiling the data, it was considered by both the working group and workshop participants to be not the most useful format for the ongoing use of the data. As part of this project, a web interface has been developed to enable users to search by chosen fields to extract relevant information. The web interface is a prototype format only to support accessibility by authorised users until 30 June 2016. It is recommended that the CESC review this in early 2016 to determine future use and potential applicability of this platform. It has been agreed the web

interface will be accessed through the AEMI knowledge hub (in accordance with the Project funding agreement).

In relation to the ongoing maintenance of the Register, it was agreed by the Working Group and National Workshop participants that the Register should be viewed as a "snapshot at a point in time" given its purpose was to bring together a list of current initiatives in dealing with vulnerable sections of society. CESC may wish to consider that, similar to the stocktake undertaken under the auspices of the "Keeping our Mob Safe Strategy", there is merit in updating the Register on a two yearly basis by the CESC.

3.4   Gap Analysis

The intent of this project was to deliver a gap analysis based on the stocktake in relation to initiatives that had been undertaken to address vulnerability.   This was perhaps the most challenging aspect of the project given the lack of qualitative data available to measure the effectiveness of the initiatives.

In developing the baseline for the stocktake, one of the key pieces of information that the Working Group wanted to establish was the evidence of best practice outcomes, i.e., that the investment in the initiative led to improved outcomes for the intended target group (qualitative indicator).

In analysing the stocktake data it was clear that, for the majority of initiatives/projects, there was no evaluation process. For a very small number of initiatives, the intent was to evaluate but this hadn't occurred due to resourcing issues.   Apart from the NSW Government, Community Resilience Innovation Program (NDRP funded program), there was no requirement by funding bodies (placed on project recipients) to measure and evaluate project outcomes.

Workshop participants also questioned the alignment of some of the projects funded with the key priorities of the NSDR: "How do NSDR goals fit with what was achieved – there are disconnects between the goal and what they are actually achieving". Further, it was the clear view of workshop participants that, given the lack of qualitative evaluation data, it was "hard to identify best practice".

Under the National Partnership Agreement, the Commonwealth Government provides States and Territories with a significant funding allocation to implement the NSDR. It is therefore critical to identify measures to determine the progress this funding is making towards achieving community wellbeing and increasing its resilience. A robust evaluation framework could be seen as a desirable criterion that should be applied to future emergency management funding programs to aid decision makers in assessing the return on their investment.   Further, by ensuring the evaluation framework incorporates qualitative indicators, we, as emergency managers can effectively assess the success of the program, look to learn from its shortcomings and enhance community resilience.

Recommendation 1: That the CESC consider the potential future use of the Register (as a tool), including the ongoing maintenance, resource and funding requirements associated with maintaining the Register.

Recommendation 2: That ANZEMC note the importance of developing qualitative indicators for future emergency management grant programs (that align with key priority outcomes of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience) to assist in informing program evaluation.

4. REGISTER OF INITIATIVES – A SELECTION OF EXAMPLES

As identified in the Gap Analysis (Section 3.4), in analysing the data from the stocktake, it was clear that for the majority of initiatives/projects, there was no evaluation process, therefore, it was challenging to measure the effectiveness of the initiatives.

The following table lists some examples of good practice initiatives taken from the Register. Due to the size of the Register, only a few key examples have been chosen to demonstrate the key observations/themes from the workshop.

Key observations/themes	Example Initiative	Lead agency	Description
Using community service providers as conduits of emergency management knowledge can identify and assist vulnerable individuals due to trusted and established relationships.	Assisting Clients to be Bushfire Ready Training	Western Australia Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Assisting Clients to be Bushfire Ready training is an interactive workshop that is targeted at community service providers with at-risk clients in high bushfire risk areas. The training provides care workers with knowledge and skills to assist their clients to be prepared for bushfire, and to offer service providers information around how to protect themselves when travelling and working in bushfire risk areas. The aim of the workshop is to give the service provider the knowledge to have informed conversations with clients, to increase their levels of preparedness should a bushfire occur. This centres around having a bushfire survival plan and leaving early based on identified triggers.
Isolated/remote communities' reliance on external assistance during emergencies is lessened when internal capabilities of communities are developed through training and formalisation of community participation into their own response operations.	Community Emergency Relief Centre Training	Victoria Health and Human Services Emergency Management	The local government shires of Yarriambiack and Pyrenees conducted projects that encouraged the community to become volunteer members in the operation of a local municipal relief centre during emergencies. Both of these communities are remote communities. The aim of this project is to have community volunteers trained and willing to get involved during an event of an emergency, as council and agency staff may not be able to be in attendance due to remoteness.
Linking community service organisations within EM structures	Emergency Management Planning and Preparedness for the Aged Care Industry -	Tasmania Aged & Community Services	The project objectives are to work with key stakeholders to: • Develop clearly articulated roles and responsibilities of both residential aged care and community based care organisations that are aligned within emergency management arrangements. • Develop and provide evidence based tools and templates to assist aged care and community services providers in preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergency situations.

			• Provision of practical emergency management expertise through workshops to support providers in their emergency management development. • Ensure the completion of high quality and consistent aged care industry emergency management plans by providers, that are aligned with emergency management arrangements at the local and regional level and which utilise evidence-based risk management framework and all hazards approach. • Establishment of local industry networks
Through training and engagement, commonly perceived vulnerable groups (e.g. youth) do not have to be perceived as vulnerable throughout disasters. They may develop more resilience and participate in emergency operations	Emergency Service Cadet Program	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services	This initiative engaged youth through a cadet program that enhanced awareness of disasters and response. Additionally, it enhanced awareness of careers and opportunities in full-time and volunteer emergency services
Connecting with community service organisations help identify and involve clients with vulnerabilities in emergency management plans.	Bushfire Safety	South Australian - Department for Communities and Social Inclusion	DCSI identify and review the needs of clients living in bushfire prone areas. When opportunities arise, they are provided with bushfire information and advised to develop bushfire survival plans. Staff offer assistance with developing plans where required. When required, staff use the client's bushfire survival plan to make arrangements for relocation of client and pets
	Building disaster resilience in multicultural Australia - Pictorial community safety action guides	Commonwealth Attorney Generals Department	This initiative developed six Pictorial Community Safety Action Guides for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. These pictorial guides were alternatives to supplement the written Emergency Action Guides. The guides aim to help communities understand the risks associated with natural hazards that may occur in Australia and how best to be prepared to minimise any adverse effects.
- Developing strong partnership with CSO and building EM into CSO business as usual - Identify best practices and lessons learned through project evaluations.	Community Resilience Innovation Program (NDRP Grants Program)	NSW Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	The Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP) is a scheme under the NDRP that supports a broad range of locally-based projects designed to increase all-hazard disaster preparedness and build community capacity and resilience. CRIP projects are based on collaboration and partnership between local community organisations and emergency services agencies. Funding has been provided to 30 projects in 2013-14 & 2014-15.

			CRIP aims to: • Encourage local communities to engage in creative, community focussed activities that will enhance disaster resilience • Develop effective partnerships and build networks between local community organisations, councils, businesses and emergency services agencies • Foster ways to effectively engage the local community in emergency management and resilience building • Share knowledge and lessons learnt about new approaches and models through project evaluation • Support initiatives that can be integrated into current business and maintained in the longer term.
Locally led community resilience initiatives address the specific needs of the community	Teenagers in Emergencies	Teenagers in Emergencies Project Group, Gippsland Victoria	This project was initiated by four 14-year old students from Maffra Secondary College following the fire and flood events of 06/07 in Gippsland. They felt young people could be empowered in emergency situations given the right information and skills. The students engaged in fundraising to print the information booklet including a grant from the Foundation of Youth. The booklet provides a wealth of information in easy to read an easily understood language with an appealing and eye catching design.
	Halcyon Waters Emergency Watch Group Community Disaster Plan	Residents from Halcyon Waters Resort, supported by City of Gold Coast and Emergency Management Qld	Halcyon Waters is a community exclusively for over 50's. A group of residents approached Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) in early 2012 for some flood and storm safety information. The group decided to form an emergency watch committee and create a disaster response plan for the residents, which was fully supported by the Halcyon Waters Management, Gold Coast City Council and EMQ. Disaster management training was provided to the group by EMQ in early 2013 which led to the resident group creating an emergency response plan, disaster risk register and allocating wardens within the community to assist with information and response during disasters. An exercise will be run in August to test the plan.
Removal of language barrier in communicating emergency information develops the capabilities of CALD communities.	Emergency Preparedness Guide (Multicultural Guide)	ACT Community Services	This NDRP project enabled the translation of the ACT Emergency Preparedness Guide (The Guide) into multiple languages, in direct response to Section 3.5 of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience – *Empowering Individuals and Communities to Exercise Choice and Take*

			Responsibility. The Guide was translated into the top ten (10) languages (other than English) spoken in the ACT. This project improved the resilience of CALD members of the community deemed vulnerable through lack of English language skills, by encouraging them to prepare an emergency plan, connect with their neighbours and other members of their cultural community, and support agencies, to discuss what assistance they might need during an emergency and keep details of their important contact numbers and important information in a central place so that it is accessible to grab if they have to leave their home in an emergency
Developing strong partnership with CSO and building EM into CSO business as usual	Building Resilience to Disasters	Australia Red Cross	In 2013 Red Cross facilitated workshops in Hunter and Central Coast regions for Community Service Organisations to build knowledge and skills in assisting their clients to be better prepared for disasters. The project recognised the trusted relationship that these organisations have with clients and their vital role in disaster preparedness. The workshops brought together Emergency Services agencies, Councils and local services providers who support people with disability, older people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Over 36 organisations from across the Hunter and Central Coast participated, and many of these have now incorporated disaster preparedness into their service provision. The project engaged, built on, and further strengthened networks and partnerships across the emergency management and community services sectors. It has become a springboard for several new disaster resilience initiatives that are currently underway across the Hunter and Central Coast.

5. THEMES ARISING FROM THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP

The purpose of the National Workshop was to bring together agency experts to discuss the research, programs and initiatives that are being undertaken across Australia to address vulnerable sections of society and disaster resilience strategies. Attendees at the workshop represented response, recovery and community agencies.

The one day workshop had as its three key objectives:

- What questions do we want the stocktake to answer;
- How do we best engage the vulnerable sections of society in a collaborative approach, how do we roll out best practice at a national level; and
- What is the information telling us about the current state of initiatives that we want to highlight in the Report and which may shape the Report recommendations.

The workshop attendees heard from two presenters:

- Mr John Richardson, Australian Red Cross "Beyond Vulnerability: Developing Disaster Resilience Capacities to target household preparedness activities"; and
- Ms Katrina Webster, ACOSS Project Manager "Building the Disaster Resilience of the Australian Community Services Sector".

Jurisdictions were also invited to present case studies of positive examples of initiatives within their State/ Territory.

Some of the main themes identified during the course of the workshop were:

- Rethink how vulnerability is defined and people with vulnerabilities are identified;
- Identify vulnerability through capabilities instead of demographic groups;
- Shift the language from "the vulnerable' to 'vulnerabilities';
- Emergency management agencies to adopt a "strengths based approach" to engaging with people with vulnerabilities as is used on a day to day basis in the community sector;
- Support and resource community service organisations to integrate disaster resilience and business continuity into their day to day business;
- Build emergency management into community service organisations' charter, training, responsibilities and contracts;
- Develop strong partnerships between emergency management agencies and community service organisations;
- Engage people with vulnerabilities in a collaborative approach with community sectors and emergency management agencies;
- Promote best practice and innovation through resilience awards ;
- Share stocktake information easily in a user friendly format;

- Recognise, access and use the knowledge the community sector already has;
- Develop a National policy position on emergency management for people with vulnerabilities in disaster to guide future strategies and initiatives.
- Linking with and sharing information from this Report with other ANZEMC subcommittees.

6. FINDINGS

The Report findings have been informed by the compilation of the register of current initiatives, the VSS National Workshop and literature review.

6.1 Rethinking Vulnerability in an emergency management context

Historical definition of vulnerable people in Emergency Management

The emergency management sector has typically approached supporting people with vulnerabilities by categorising through demographics, such as elderly, young people or indigenous as an example.

Evidence from previous disasters has led us to form the opinion that people within certain demographic groups are more likely to experience worse outcomes both during and after a disaster. For example, the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission revealed that particular demographic groups within the community (the elderly, young people and people with medical conditions) were more likely to have been negatively impacted by the disaster, over represented in the mortality figures and more likely to have longer term negative impacts after the disaster.

It is evidence such as the example above that has led the emergency management sector to adopt a "demographic" approach to target initiatives to those "identified vulnerable groups" across the prevention, preparation, response and recovery domains. Whilst this approach provides decision makers with an immediate response to mitigating risk in the community, it also validates the long held perception that all individuals in the identified demographic are vulnerable.

The Vulnerable Sections of Society project is an example of the demographic concept of vulnerability. In the development of the Register of Initiatives, vulnerability was defined to be 13 sections of society, in other words, demographic groups. Initiatives were required to identify which groups they addressed. These groups were:

- Carers (especially youth)
- CALD
- Children and youth
- Elderly
- Geographically challenged
- Indigenous
- Low socio economic
- Medically reliant
- Mental health consumers
- People with disability
- Remote communities/Social isolation
- Transient

- Women

Registers of vulnerable people

One method of identifying vulnerable people (in an emergency management context) is through the creation of a register or list. These registers/lists, such as the one developed as a result of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission's recommendation (what became known as the vulnerable person's register), can be used to inform emergency management operations, in particular response and recovery operations.

There are limitations with the creation and maintenance of registers. Firstly, registers can be unreliable due to the fluid nature of vulnerability. Vulnerability is fluid as people can move, living conditions can change, and medical issues vary. Registers are likely to go out of date quickly because there will be people vulnerable now who were not vulnerable 2-10 years ago, and people who were considered vulnerable then may no longer be so.

Secondly, the creation of a register may negatively impact on the resilience of those on the register. If people know that they are on a register, it may create the perception that an agency will help them during a disaster instead of taking action themselves. Dependencies can also be created if people are assisted in one disaster and expect to be helped in the next disaster. There may be a belief by individuals on a register that they should not act during a disaster unless they are instructed to do so. An example of this occurred recently in South Australia, where pre-identified vulnerable people are contacted by Red Cross volunteers during heatwaves for welfare checks. This is a very effective initiative and reduces the impacts of heatwaves on these people. However, during the bushfires in the Adelaide Hills in January 2015, some of the people who did not self evacuate (despite public messaging to leave) stayed in fire zones as they reported that they were expecting a call because they were on the register.

This is not to say that registers are not useful documents, but rather than register individuals, a register could be a useful tool to identify locations/facilities that provide support to people with vulnerabilities and provide a single point of contact. A good example would be a list of nursing homes with information on the facility's capacity (including details of those residents who are confined to their bed). With the assistance of geo-spatial data mapping, response agencies can prioritise resource allocations more effectively. Registers allow quick identification and access of contact details, and can assist with linking those facilities with other services and community service organisations to provide support in a crisis.

Workshop participants were also sceptical of the value placed on "vulnerable people registers"

"If we are going to sectorise/categorise huge portions of our community into vulnerability – there creates an expectation that we will help them. We can't help huge numbers of people. Vulnerability is a fluid thing, it's important not to make people vulnerable when we are trying to build resilience."

"There are people who experience vulnerability on a daily basis and people who are vulnerable according to the events. The lists are changing all the time. Some people who are vulnerable now weren't vulnerable 5-10 years ago, the lists change dramatically."

Vulnerability– more than demographic groups

Whilst targeting demographic groups can assist decision makers to quickly identify potential people with vulnerabilities, the demographic concept of vulnerability can be misleading and does not take into consideration the following:

- People within these vulnerable demographic groups can be resilient;
- Vulnerability is fluid, and depending on circumstances, everyone has the potential to be vulnerable; and
- The factors of vulnerability.

As per previous advice provided to ANZEMC from CESC in October 2013, some members of identified vulnerable groups may be more resilient in times of emergency due to certain factors. Examples of these factors may be:

- Better networks - elderly members of the community are often networked and have better support infrastructure than a suburban commuter who's social and professional networks may be a long distance from their residence;
- Strong linkages - allows information to be effectively conveyed i.e. migrant groups in some areas have the ability to leverage 'bridging' networks as a channel for communication, and elderly people may have good links/ channels through carers, social clubs etc. who can share information; and
- Good bonding networks people living in remote communities may be able to better identify other vulnerable members of a community and to convey information to them.

Recent research conducted by Dr Victoria Cornell from the University of Adelaide titled "Old and Wise: emergency preparedness isn't a checklist"[2] supports the position of incorrectly labelling a demographic as vulnerable. Her research focussed on the preparedness of older South Australians in an emergency. The research findings indicate that "it's not advancing age alone that makes people most vulnerable" and acknowledges that the lived experiences of older people contributes to their resilience.

Relying on demographic indicators to identify people with vulnerabilities may also result in people with vulnerabilities who don't neatly fall into one of the identified categories to slip through the gaps. Vulnerability is contextual and fluid. Vulnerability can depend on social, geographical or medical risks and all community members are at risk of being vulnerable in certain contexts. There are groups of people that may become vulnerable due to a short term circumstance. For example, they could be persons not wishing to leave their premises due to protecting livestock or have only recently had an operation. In order to identify and assist people with vulnerabilities, planning needs to come to terms with how best to identify who is vulnerable. The Australian Red Cross has recently

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[2] Old and Wise: emergency preparedness isn't a checklist, Dr Victoria Cornell, Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Volume 30, Issue 1, 2015

undertaken a project titled *"Beyond vulnerability: Developing Disaster Resilience Capacities to target household preparedness activities"[3]*. The report states

"Agencies working in emergency management, when looking to prioritise support, have tended to look at structural vulnerabilities based largely upon demographics, e.g. age, ethnicity. Approaching targeted support in this way takes a one size fits all approach. This can lead to poor targeting of services and support. For example, in assuming all people over 70 are vulnerable, ignore the fact that they may have good health, or be well off, or have good family support. It also means that people may be missed, as they do not meet a neat demographic category."

The Australian Red Cross report looks at reshaping historical thinking about vulnerability and moving beyond the stereotypes by identifying four adaptive capacities to consider in understanding and shaping the way the emergency management sector can identify and therefore put the appropriate strategies in place to respond to people with vulnerabilities:

- **Wellbeing** – good health status and the ability to cope with: challenges of life and disruption from emergencies.
- **Connection** – good community networks, trust in local institutions, local services, connection to place, participation in local community.
- **Security** – protection against loss of assets and livelihoods, maintaining personal safety and shelter. One of the biggest challenges for preparedness and recovery is financial capacity.
- **Knowledge** – of hazards and local history, and the ability to access information to make informed decisions, e.g. hazard risk profiles of the local area, local emergency plans.

The key areas of resilience identified by the Red Cross align with research findings of the Torrens Resilience Institute (http://www.torrensresilience.org/images/pdfs/toolkit/trireport.pdf).

In summary, vulnerability is a complex issue. Instead of primarily focusing on demographic groups, the emergency management sector needs to develop a resilience and strength based approach to vulnerability that takes into consideration factors that cause vulnerability rather than specifying vulnerable sections of society. A similar approach is taken by both tertiary service providers and the community sector when working with intensive high need individuals and families. The Community Engagement Framework Handbook reinforces this point "Whilst an approach that seeks to empower communities is relatively new in the emergency management sector, it has been the basis of community development work over many decades, particularly in the social sciences. Connecting with the knowledge and expertise in this field will build capacity within the sector and demonstrate sound community engagement practice."[4]

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[3] Beyond Vulnerability:Developing Disaster Resilience Capacities to target household preparedness activities, Australian Red Cross 2009.

[4] Pg, 3, Community Engagement Framework, Handbook 6, Australian Emergency Management Institute, 2013.

National definition of vulnerability - Vulnerability through reduced resilience

Currently there is no national definition for vulnerable people. In order for consistency and accurate identification of people with vulnerabilities across jurisdictions, ANZEMC should consider adopting a national definition of vulnerability which supports the understanding and acceptance of the linkages between vulnerability and resilience, as outlined in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

This National definition needs to shift the language and perception of identifying vulnerability through demographic groups to a strengths based model with the focus on what causes vulnerability through greater understanding of what makes someone resilient. Through understanding what makes someone resilient (such as the Red Cross capabilities listed above) agencies can identify people who may not be resilient, and therefore vulnerable. Such a model also recognises the strengths these people may have; they may be vulnerable in some situations, but resilient in others. The strengths based approach will also allow agencies to identify what capabilities are required in order to reduce/mitigate factors leading to vulnerability.

By way of example, Oakes Estate is a small isolated community of approximately 280 residents located on the outskirts of Canberra. It is a unique community to the Canberra population given its:

- Isolation from services (the community is situated on the ACT/NSW border);
- A high concentration of supported public housing accommodation (with a transient population);
- Lack of public transport (no ACT bus service operating, intermittent private bus operator in Queanbeyan services the area); and
- Lower than per capita percentage of vehicle ownership.

Through a community development project recently conducted in Oakes Estate, residents, for the most part considered they were prepared to respond in the event of an emergency, however, given the low number of residents who own a vehicle, the ability of the community to self evacuate is reduced. Further, the highly transient nature of residents living in supported public housing means that although current residents feel that they would be ok, it may not be the case for new residents moving in.

The project is looking at leveraging the existing strengths in the community (e.g. long standing residents who know the natural hazards in the area and numerous trusted community organisations already embedded in the community) as well as partnering with local response and recovery agencies to put strategies in place for the community to manage its own needs in an emergency.

6.2   National Policy Position Statement

There is currently no formal national policy position that recognises the complexities of vulnerability and the factors contributing to vulnerability.

In a community that is considered to be disaster resilient:

- People have taken steps to anticipate disasters and protect themselves and their assets.
- They have committed the necessary resources and are capable of organising themselves

before, during and after a disaster;

- People understand risks and are informed of local hazards;
- The community works together, utilising existing strengths, networks and structures;
- The community works in partnership with emergency services.

When these 'norms" are disrupted, breakdown or simply don't exist, the result is a community/individual that becomes vulnerable.

At a jurisdictional level (to varying degrees) States and Territories have recognised the need for planning that identifies and supports people with vulnerabilities before, during and following an emergency. The Tasmanian Government developed it's *Emergency Management Framework for Vulnerable People* in January 2015, a state wide policy

> *"to assist in the development and maintenance of emergency management arrangements that:*
>
> a. *Consider and prioritise the essential needs of vulnerable people before, during and after an emergency: and*
> b. *Enable service providers to readily identify, locate and communicate with vulnerable people in an emergency."*

In 2013, the Government of South Australia undertook a project *People with Vulnerabilities in Disaster: Environmental scan and gap analysis of projects/programs for people with vulnerabilities in disasters* to understand the extent of vulnerability, services provided to those that are vulnerable and mapping this information against known risks in the environment with a view to future planning/program considerations.

The NSDR acknowledges vulnerability as a consideration but it doesn't define it or provide guidance on how we as a nation plan for and respond to communities/individuals with vulnerabilities in a disaster.

The need for a National Policy Position Statement on vulnerability was a unanimous outcome from the National Workshop. All participants considered vulnerability needed to be acknowledged and addressed as a priority at a national level.

There needs to be an acknowledgement that for people with vulnerabilities, their needs before, during and following an emergency event will require additional planning and support, despite the best efforts of agencies and communities to build resilience. The Policy Statement could encompass:

- Definition of vulnerability;
- An increased understanding of factors that increase vulnerability;
- Key priorities in addressing vulnerability;
- Planning considerations;
- Communication and engagement strategies (as outlined in the Community Engagement Handbook);
- Acknowledgement of the link between mitigation and the community; and
- Investment in the development of strong partnerships between emergency management

agencies and community service organisations.

Recommendation 3: Development of a National Policy Position Statement (incorporating an agreed definition of vulnerability)

That ANZEMC consider developing a National Policy Position Statement acknowledging that despite the best efforts of agencies and communities to build resilience, for people with vulnerabilities, their needs before, during and following an emergency event will require additional planning and support. The Policy Statement could encompass:

• A nationally agreed definition of vulnerability:

• An understanding of factors that increase vulnerability;

• Planning considerations;

• Communication and engagement strategies; and

• Importance of strong partnerships between emergency management agencies and community service

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6.3 Integrating Community Organisations into Emergency Management Planning and Preparedness through active partnerships

Generally speaking, when addressing emergency management planning and preparedness, community service organisations (CSO's) are underutilised resources. Traditionally, CSO's are already engaging on a day to day basis with those in the community who are most vulnerable, they have developed positive and trusting relationships with an individual or family to build resilience. Hence, CSO's can also help to provide an informed measure of post disaster needs in the community and mobilise community and local resources in times of crisis.

Emergency management agencies on the other hand are generally regarded as subject matter experts in planning for and managing disasters. They have contextual experience and knowledge in relation to the risk/threat, an understanding of the environment and the authority and resources to respond to disasters.

Parallel to the VSS project, the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) is undertaking a NEMP project titled "*Building the Resilience of the Community Sector: Benchmarking and Resources*". This research project aims to build the resilience of the community sector by strengthening the resilience of CSO's and looks at the ability of CSO's to adapt services during disasters. In 2013, ACOSS undertook an initial research project into the Australian community sector's vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather impacts and its adaptive capacity. The research included a national survey of CSO's which highlighted that CSO's perceived that they were not prepared for disasters and were underutilised by emergency services during or after an event.   This

underutilisation may result from perceived disconnection from emergency structures, and plans, even though CSO's provide support to people with vulnerabilities before, during and after disasters.

The survey also demonstrated that even though there is the perception of a disconnect from formal emergency structures, CSO's are very willing to engage in the space. More than 80% indicated they would like to work more collaboratively with emergency management services during disasters and approximately 60% would like to help clients prepare for impacts (disasters). There is also a clear willingness by CSO's to improve resilience through emergency preparedness and plans.

The findings of this ACOSS survey were also echoed by the community organisation representatives attending the national VSS workshop.

The NSDR acknowledges the role of non-government and community organisations as being at the "forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia". Historically, CSO's are mostly engaged by the emergency management sector in supporting the recovery of a community post disaster. This focus needs to shift whereby CSO's are recognised as critical partners in the planning and preparedness phases.

The absence of CSO's involvement in planning for disasters is also highlighted in the recent report *"People with vulnerabilities in disasters"* undertaken by the Government of South Australia. The Report found there is limited evidence of broad planning, collaboration and coordination in "the development and provision of services for all vulnerable people across multiple hazards"[5].

When we consider the successful recovery of a community from a disaster, the evidence exists that 'community led' recovery is considered best practice and delivers far better outcomes. This same theory can (and should) be adapted to actively engaging the community in its own planning and preparedness for disasters and leveraging off already established (and trusted) relationships that CSO's have within the community.

The recent Productivity Commission Inquiry of Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements recommends the Commonwealth Government consider increased support for disaster mitigation. Whilst mitigation is often thought of in the context of infrastructure, increasing the community's resilience has to be considered as an upfront investment in mitigating long term dependency on government support for people with vulnerabilities following an emergency. With this in mind, there is merit in considering possible future funding opportunities for CSO's accessing NDRP funding to build their capacity and for emergency management agencies to build relationships with CSO's. However, the current criteria for CSO's to access NDRP funding from States and Territories could be considered a barrier given that some jurisdictions require a cash contribution from CSO's as a percentage of the overall funding sought. By removing this requirement, CSO's are in a better position to apply for funding. Jurisdictions may want to take this further by targeting a percentage of their NDRP funding exclusively for partnership projects between CSO's and the emergency management sector, as is the case in NSW.

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[5] *People with Vulnerabilities in disasters – Environmental Scan and gap analysis of project/program in disasters 2013, Government of South Australia pg 7.*

The NSW Government has targeted its NDRP funding to projects that look to develop these key partnerships between the sectors. By way of example, the NSW Community Resilience Innovation Program (funded through the NDRP) is based on 'collaboration and partnership between local community organisations and emergency services agencies". Projects supported through the Program are designed to respond to specific needs and characteristics of the local community, including people identified as more vulnerable to disasters. Further, to ensure measurable outcomes, project evaluation is built in to the project requirements.

Emergency management agencies need to leverage the support of CSO's, acknowledging the strength of developing critical partnerships with these organisations in emergency management planning and preparedness.

The development of strong partnerships between Emergency Service Agencies and CSO's can improve the outcomes of people with vulnerabilities during and after disasters. The following could support the development of CSO's:

- Support and resource CSO to integrate disaster resilience into their core business;
- Build organisational resilience to disasters through agency plans, charters, training, responsibilities and business continuity plans;
- Recognise and support CSOs key role in building the resilience of their clients; and
- Provide emergency management training to CSO's.

Recommendation 4: That ANZEMC agree that CSOs are essential partners in building resilience in vulnerable communities and require the support and resourcing of Government to integrate disaster resilience into their core business.

That ANZEMC recognise the role Community Service Organisations undertake in supporting people with vulnerabilities facing everyday adversity and in times of crisis. Further, that CSO's:

- Have the capacity to help prepare vulnerable people for emergencies; and
- Play an essential role in disaster planning, relief and recovery.

6.4   Emergency Management Handbook Companion document

There is currently no specific emergency management resource dedicated to understanding and planning for the needs of people with vulnerabilities.

A key recommendation arising from the National Workshop was the need for a handbook, (in line with the current range of Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series) that provides a comprehensive best practice reference resource that aims to improve outcomes for people with vulnerabilities who have been affected by a disaster.

Further discussion by the Working Group considered that a companion document to the existing Handbook Series may provide better outcomes given the needs of people with vulnerabilities and

particular consideration in all disaster phases (planning, preparedness, response and recovery). The relevant handbooks identified are:

- Community Engagement Framework;
- Evacuation Planning; and
- Community Recovery.

The advantage of each handbook having a companion document instead of being a separate handbook on vulnerable people in emergency management is that the companion document will ensure a wider audience. The companion document will also increase the integration of effective management of people with vulnerabilities throughout emergency management agencies.

Recommendation 5: Development of a companion document on vulnerability in an emergency management context.

That ANZEMC support development of a companion document to the existing Emergency Management Handbook Series that provides guidance to emergency management agencies in understanding the complexities of vulnerability with the aims of improving outcomes for people with vulnerabilities who have been affected by a disaster.

7. REFERENCES

The register of initiatives provides the majority of references listed throughout this report. In addition, the following key documents informed this report:

- *Community Engagement Framework (Handbook 6), Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series, Australian Emergency Management Institute, 2013*

- *Disaster and disadvantage; Social vulnerability in emergency management; VCOSS; 2014*

- *People with Vulnerabilities in disasters; Environmental scan and gap analysis of projects/programs for people with vulnerabilities in disasters, Government of South Australia, 2013*

- *Implementation of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience Stakeholder Perceptions, Research Report, Attorney Generals Department, 2015*

- *National Stocktake Task – Social Vulnerability (SCPEM July 2013*

- *National Approach Emergency Management, Attorney Generals Department*

- *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements 2009*

- *National Strategy Disaster Resilience, Attorney Generals Department*

- *National Stocktake Task – Social Vulnerability (CESC August 2013)*

- *CESC 4 Paper VSS ANZEMC 4 Oct 2013*

- *Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI) Resources (brochures, toolkits and publications) relating to community awareness, community engagement and emergency preparedness can be located at:*

    - *http://www.em.gov.au/Resources/Pages/default.aspx*

- *http://www.em.gov.au/Publications/Communityawarenesspublications/Pages/default.aspx*

- *Attorney-General's Department, 2013, Communicating with People with Disability: National Guidelines for Emergency Managers Handbook 5, Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series, Australian Emergency Management Institute, Canberra*

- *Attorney-General's Department, 2011, Disaster Health Handbook 1, Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series, Australian Emergency Management Institute, Canberra*

- *Attorney-General's Department, 2013, Evacuation Planning Handbook 4, Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series, Australian Emergency Management Institute, Canberra*

8. APPENDICES

8.1   Appendix A - Vulnerable Sections of Society Workshop Attendees

The following representatives attended the VSS Workshop:

Janelle Wheatley (**Chair - VSS Working Group**) (ACT Government)

Tracey McGregor (National Project Officer – **VSS Working Group**)

Mark Robertson (ACT Government)

Kaylee Rutland (ACT, Emergency Services Agency)

Rolf Fenner (Australian Local Government Association; Member - **VSS Working Group**)

Pauline Cole (SA, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion)

Tony McLoughlin (SA Fire & Emergency Services Commission; Member – **VSS Working Group**)

Wendy Graham (NSW, Ministry for Police & Emergency Services; Member – **VSS Working Group**)

Mandy Moore (NSW, Ministry for Police & Emergency Services – **VSS Working Group**)

Jo Beadle (QLD, Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience – **VSS Working Group Proxy for Amanda Pafumi**)

Erin Fuery (WA, Australian Red Cross)

Brett Saarinen (TAS, Emergency Management)

Nick Atkins (TAS, Department of Premier and Cabinet)

Ben Brungs (NSW, Ministry for Police & Emergency Services; CESC Project Officer and **VSS Project Officer**)

Ariane Malpas (Commonwealth Recovery Operations)

Natalia Mallia (CESC Secretariat)

Amy Arbery (Department of Human Services)

Chris Redmond (ACT, Woden Community Service Inc)

Katrina Webster (ACOSS)

John Richardson (Red Cross)

Paul Hargreaves (Victoria Police)

Eli Niall (VIC, Department of Health and Human Services)

Toni Brown (Tasmanian Health Organisation)

Diana Bernadi (NSW, Red Cross)

Tracey Leotta (WA, Dept. of Fire and Emergency Services)

Christine Healy (ACT, Community representative, member of Community Expert Reference Group, ACT Asbestos Taskforce)