

# Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience



Australian Government  
Department of Home Affairs



Australian Institute for  
Disaster Resilience



AUSTRALIAN DISASTER RESILIENCE  
HANDBOOK COLLECTION

# Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience

First edition 2020

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The Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection provides guidance on national principles and practices for disaster resilience.

The Handbook Collection:

- provides an authoritative, trusted and freely available source of knowledge about disaster resilience principles in Australia
- aligns national disaster resilience strategy and policy with practice, by guiding and supporting jurisdictions, agencies and other organisations and individuals in their implementation and adoption
- highlights and promotes the adoption of good practice in building disaster resilience in Australia

- builds interoperability between jurisdictions, agencies, the private sector, local businesses and community groups by promoting use of a common language and coordinated, nationally agreed principles.

The Handbook Collection is developed and reviewed by national consultative committees representing a range of state and territory agencies, governments, organisations and individuals involved in disaster resilience. The collection is sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs.

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Australian Emergency Management Arrangements

## Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience

Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers

Community Recovery

Emergency Planning

Evacuation Planning

Flood Emergency Planning for Disaster Resilience

Health and Disaster Management

Land Use Planning for Disaster Resilient Communities

Lessons Management

Managing Exercises

Managing the Floodplain: A Guide to Best Practice in Flood Risk Management in Australia

National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines

Public Information and Warnings

Safe and Healthy Crowded Places

Tsunami Emergency Planning in Australia

# Acknowledgements

This handbook was prepared by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience with the assistance of Dr Margaret Moreton of Leva Consulting, with financial assistance from the Australian Government. Responsibility for the views, information or advice expressed in this handbook does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government.

This handbook was made possible through the support of a broad cross-section of the disaster resilience and emergency management sector.

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## Acknowledgements

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This handbook is available on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub:

**[www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-community-engagement](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-community-engagement)**

For feedback and updates to this handbook, please contact AIDR: **[enquiries@aidr.org.au](mailto:enquiries@aidr.org.au)**

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# Executive summary

Communities across Australia and internationally are experiencing increasingly intense and frequent disasters and emergency events. Community engagement is the essential process through which all stakeholders come together to reduce the risk of disaster and enhance resilience collectively.

*Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* outlines the principles, approaches and core elements of effective community engagement. This engagement may occur at any stage of the disaster cycle: before, during or after an event. Increasingly, a community may be engaged in simultaneous actions for disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery as cascading and concurrent events occur, such as flooding after a drought or bushfire during a heatwave. Any individual, group, organisation or agency may instigate the engagement, whether from government, non-government, the private sector or from communities across Australia.

The purpose of the handbook is to provide guidance to engage inclusively with communities, drawing on the strengths and perspectives of a diverse range of individuals and groups. The handbook recognises the value of approaches to engagement which cater for variations in age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, cultural and language background or heritage, socio-economic status or any aspect of diversity. This handbook also provides guidance about monitoring, review and evaluation, to support ongoing learning about effective community engagement and to build the evidence base.

The handbook supports the implementation of a number of key national disaster resilience frameworks and documents, including:

- *The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (Council of Australian Governments, 2011)
- *The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2018)
- *Profiling Australia's Vulnerability: the interconnected causes and cascading effects of systemic disaster risk* (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2018).

The development of this handbook has included a review of the previous *Community Engagement Framework* (2013), *Communicating with People with a Disability* (2013) and the manual *Guidelines for Emergency Management in CALD Communities* (2007) and is intended to replace these documents.

# Introduction

## Purpose of this handbook

Community engagement is a critical component of emergency management and action to reduce disaster risk and strengthen resilience. Disaster resilience cannot be developed for, or on behalf of, communities. Rather, it relies on the sharing of information, understanding, decision-making, responsibility and resourcing within and between communities and partners.

This handbook presents national principles of community engagement for disaster resilience and provides high-level guidance to support those who engage with communities in disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. It draws on contemporary knowledge, skills and good practice from the fields of public participation, community development, emergency management, disaster risk reduction and disaster resilience. Handbook content adheres to the premise that communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters more effectively when they are active partners in decision-making processes.

The guidance presented in the handbook adopts a strengths-based approach that seeks to maximise inclusion and participation for better quality engagement and more effective disaster resilience outcomes. The guidance recognises the right to participate, reinforcing the importance of acting respectfully to meet specific needs and address systemic barriers which might otherwise prevent or inhibit people from taking part. Engaging with the community through flexible and inclusive approaches, styles and methods that are easily understood, responsive and adaptable will help to ensure that actions for disaster resilience meet the diverse needs of local community members.

The handbook is intended to guide and assist those with varying levels of expertise in community engagement and disaster and emergency management, including:

- policy makers and practitioners working at national, state and territory and local levels of government
- practitioners working in the non-government sector
- practitioners and organisations working in the private sector
- practitioners working in disaster resilience, emergency management and emergency services
- volunteers working in disaster resilience, emergency management and emergency services
- community leaders, community-based groups and community members
- international organisations.

The handbook may also assist communities seeking to understand the engagement processes initiated by partners or intending to initiate their own engagement processes to strengthen disaster resilience.

## Context

*Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (2020) is part of the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection. It fulfils a critical role in the ongoing improvement of disaster preparation, response and recovery under the policy framework established by the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (COAG, 2011).

The handbook reflects increasing national and international focus on the need to reduce disaster risk and build disaster resilience within and across communities, as considered in the *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* (2018), which was endorsed into national policy in March 2020 and *Profiling Australia's Vulnerability: The interconnected causes and cascading effects of systemic disaster risk* (2018).

The handbook incorporates a review of and supersedes the following publications:

- *Communicating with People with a Disability: National Guidelines for Emergency Managers* (2013)
- *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience: Community Engagement Framework* (2013)
- *Manual 44 - Guidelines for Emergency Management in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities* (2007).

## Scope

### Key term: community

The handbook works with the following definition of community: 'a social group with a commonality of association and generally defined by location, shared experience, or function and with a number of things in common, such as culture, heritage, language, ethnicity, pastimes, occupation, or workplace' (AIDR Glossary 2019).

This handbook applies to any community engagement process, whether the community is large or small, rural, regional or urban. This handbook focuses on communities of place, while recognising that other types of communities are relevant, such as communities of interest and online communities. The handbook also notes that there can be multiple communities within a community of place.

This handbook has been developed considering the needs and aspirations of groups including but not limited to the following:

- Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples)
- culturally and linguistically diverse groups (CALD)
- people who are living with disability, chronic illness or mental health issues
- people of diverse genders and sexual orientations
- those living in socially or physically isolated, or high-risk circumstances or locations
- those experiencing homelessness, unemployment or poverty
- the elderly (whether living in their own homes or in formalised care arrangements)
- children and young people
- those with limited access to information or resources.

It is also noted that there is intersectionality between these groups in that they are not discrete and people may be part of more than one of these groups. Further explanation of some of these groups can be found in Appendix A.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with *Community Recovery* (AIDR 2018) and *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements* (AIDR 2019) to provide further contextual and complementary information.

Many individuals, groups, organisations or agencies work with communities to reduce disaster risk or develop community resilience. For the purpose of this Handbook, these individuals, groups, organisations or agencies will be referred to as 'partners'. Partners can include government, the non-government sector, the corporate or business sector, philanthropy, the emergency services sector or from other communities. The term 'partners' reflects a mutual relationship between a partner and a community.



# Chapter 1: Strategic context

This chapter provides context about why community engagement is a fundamental element of reducing disaster risk and building or strengthening disaster resilience. It also provides an overview of key concepts, frameworks, the broader policy landscape and social, environmental and economic factors that amplify the need for strong community engagement practices and processes.

## 1.1 Community engagement as a foundation for disaster resilience

### Key terms: resilience, resilient communities and community engagement

**Resilience** is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of such hazards in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management (UNDRR 2017).

A **disaster resilient community** is defined by the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* as one that 'works together to understand and manage the risks that it confronts' (COAG 2011).

A resilient community has the opportunity, capacity and capability to identify and mitigate hazards and risks, absorb the effects of disruptive events, adapt or transform in anticipation or response to disruptive events and return to a functioning state.

For the purpose of this handbook, **community engagement** is defined as the process of communities and partners working together to build resilience through collaborative action, shared capacity building and development of strong relationships built on mutual trust and respect.

Building resilient communities in the context of disaster integrates prevention, preparation, response and recovery and is a complex and continuous process, rather than a process with a definitive end point or 'destination'.

Effective community engagement for disaster resilience enables communities and partners to:

- develop an understanding of local risks and the actions required
- share and use diverse local information to better understand the assets, strengths and capabilities of the community

- provide opportunities to share and use knowledge, skills and ideas and to develop or enhance local disaster risk reduction and resilience activities
- provide mutual opportunities for learning and capability development
- build and strengthen networks and partnerships that promote trust, collaboration and a sense of shared responsibility for disaster risk reduction and resilience.

## 1.2 The context of community engagement

### Key terms: diversity and inclusion

**Diversity** refers to the ways in which people differ i.e. due to their age, caring responsibilities, cultural background, disability, gender, Indigenous background, sexual orientation, socio-economic background (or social identity) and their professional, education, work experiences and organisational role (or professional identity) (Diversity Council of Australia - as included in *Diversity and Inclusion Framework* EMV, 2016).

It is important to understand intersectionality in order to understand diversity. People may identify as relating to or accepting more than one group. For example, a person may identify as Indigenous, heterosexual and living with a disability. Treat people with respect regardless of these characteristics, rather than spend time determining which 'diversity label' best applies.

**Inclusion** occurs when a diversity of people (e.g. different ages, genders, backgrounds etc.) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their circumstances, contributions and lives, as well as the life of their community (Diversity Council of Australia: [www.dca.org.au/topics/inclusion](http://www.dca.org.au/topics/inclusion)).

Effective community engagement is inclusive and works with the complex and diverse nature of communities. For example, every community has a unique combination of people reflecting variations in:

- employment and economic circumstances and resources
- religious affiliation, belief and value systems, ethnic background and languages
- age, gender and sexual orientation
- physical and intellectual ability
- health and wellbeing
- social networks, groups and connections
- connectedness to the natural environment and Country.

Understanding community complexity and diversity will enable those initiating engagement to better prepare for and make a considered approach.

Community engagement outcomes reflect perceptions of the value of the process. This value is demonstrated when communities and partners:

- commit time and effort to establishing and maintaining mutual trust
- demonstrate shared commitment to achieving beneficial outcomes or solve problems for the community
- demonstrate ongoing commitment to building and maintaining relationships with one another before, during and after disasters and emergency events
- include a diversity of perspectives and experiences
- communicate clearly to reach agreement, or where agreement is not possible, to accept and manage any differences
- develop creative responses together, to address challenges and opportunities.

***'Each of us is unique. We are different. We are all Australians and call this home. Let us rejoice in our diversity and difference because it is they that will enrich us. It is who we are and where we want to be that will ultimately give us the strength, wisdom, inspiration and the generosity to get the job done.'***

Patrick Dodson, Former Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

Education, information, and community approaches, including those that are informed by Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge, can accelerate wide-scale behaviour changes (IPCC, 2019).

Resources and information that explore the links between Australia's climate, climate change, natural hazards and disasters can be found in the Climate and Disasters Collection on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub: [www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/collections/climate-and-disasters](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/collections/climate-and-disasters)

***'This is a climate emergency. The number of weather and climate-related disasters has more than doubled over the past forty years.'***

Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction

Information on disasters of national significance since 2016 can be found in AIDR's annual *Major Incidents Report*. The reports include key observations to identify and analyse recurring and emerging insights across hazards, sectors and jurisdictions: [www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/major-incidents-report](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/major-incidents-report)

## 1.3 Impacts and influences experienced at a community level

Alongside the local context of disaster risk and diversity, there is a range of intersecting influences at the community level that have an impact on building resilient communities. Climate change is one of these.

### 1.3.1 Climate change

Scientific evidence from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) indicates that a variable and changing climate is expected to further increase the severity and frequency of many natural hazards in Australia (CSIRO and BOM 2018). The *Fifth Assessment Report* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) note that there will be an 'increased frequency and intensity of flood damage to settlements and infrastructure in Australia', and an increase in the 'number of days with extreme fire weather' and 'greater frequency and intensity of droughts' (IPCC, 2014).

### 1.3.2 Social and economic costs of disasters

Local communities are deeply impacted by the social and economic costs of disasters. Community engagement can support communities to identify, address and mitigate risks and issues and respond to and recover from disasters. The economic cost of disasters to Australian communities in the 10 years to 2016 has averaged \$18.2 billion per year. This figure is expected to rise to an average of \$39 billion per year by 2050 (Australian Business Roundtable (ABR), 2017). It is noted that, at the time of this handbook's publication, this projected figure is being updated. The intangible costs of the impact on people's lives, their health and wellbeing, education, employment and community networks as well as environmental damage are at least equal to, if not greater than, tangible costs (ABR, 2017).

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) has reported that the cost of insurance claims from four disasters over the summer of 2019-20 alone has passed \$5.19 billion, noting this does not include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (ICA, 2020).



## 1.4 The national and international context

A range of international and national strategies, frameworks and documents provide the context for community engagement as an essential component of disaster risk reduction and resilience efforts. These include the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*, the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (2011), the *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* (2018) and *Profiling Australia's Vulnerability* (2018).

### 1.4.1 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

The *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (the *Sendai Framework*) was endorsed by Australia and the UN General Assembly, following the 2015 third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. The *Sendai Framework* is the central global framework for UN nation states (including Australia) as they seek to mitigate risk and enhance resilience.

The *Sendai Framework* is complemented by a number of key implementation guides, which include a focus on capability development to support the empowerment of all stakeholders and partners, including local communities. Organisations and governments working to support disaster risk reduction are encouraged to share and use risk information, establish collaborative action and advance and expand disaster risk reduction capability with all stakeholders and partners, including with local communities. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) has been tasked to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the *Sendai Framework*.

***'We call all stakeholders to action, aware that the realization of the new framework depends on our unceasing and tireless collective efforts to make the world safer from the risk of disasters in the decades to come for the benefit of the present and future generations.'***

*Sendai Declaration* (2015)

### 1.4.2 National Strategy for Disaster Resilience

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) (now replaced by the National Federation Reform Council (NFRRC)) endorsed the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (the *Strategy*) in February 2011. The purpose of the *Strategy* is to provide high-level guidance on disaster resilience and emergency management to federal,

state, territory and local governments, business and community leaders and the not-for-profit sector. While the *Strategy* focuses on priority areas to build disaster resilient communities across Australia, it also recognises that disaster resilience is a shared responsibility for individuals, households, businesses and communities, as well as for governments.

The *Strategy* establishes the key role the community plays in both risk reduction and building resilience, while strengthening the partnerships between emergency management agencies and the community.

***'Building upon our existing emergency planning arrangements, we need to focus more on action-based resilience planning to strengthen local capacity and capability, with greater emphasis on community engagement and a better understanding of the diversity, needs, strengths and vulnerabilities within communities. Disasters do not impact everyone in the same way, and it is often our vulnerable community members who are the hardest hit.'***

*National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*  
(COAG, 2011)

### 1.4.3 National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework

The *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* (2018) (the *Framework*) was endorsed by COAG into national policy in March 2020. The *Framework* translates the *Sendai Framework* into the domestic context for Australia and outlines a national, comprehensive approach to proactively reducing systemic disaster risk, now and into the future. Inclusive engagement is a guiding principle in the *Framework*, where all sectors are called upon to connect with diverse stakeholders to ensure inclusive decision-making, leading to more effective solutions.

Priority 1 Strategy 'Improve public awareness of, and engagement on, disaster risks and impacts', details that greater awareness of the potential long-term and highly uncertain direct and indirect impacts of disasters on all sectors requires formal and informal education and community-driven engagement. An improved understanding of the systemic nature of disaster risk and what that means for all sectors, including communities, is critical.

### The shared responsibility of resilience

Disaster resilience and risk reduction is a shared responsibility, but often not equally shared. While individuals and communities have their roles to play, they do not control many of the levers needed to reduce some disaster risks. Governments and industry in particular must take coordinated action to reduce disaster risks within their control to limit adverse impacts on communities. More than ever, limiting the impact of disasters now and in the future requires a coordinated effort across and within many areas including land use planning, infrastructure, emergency management, social policy, agriculture, education, health, community development, energy and the environment.

(*National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework*, Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2018)

#### 1.4.4 Profiling Australia's Vulnerability

*Profiling Australia's Vulnerability: The interconnected causes and cascading effects of systemic disaster risk* (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2018) proposes that reducing vulnerability across all our interconnected and interdependent systems is both essential and possible if we are to reduce the impacts and the root causes and effects of this systemic vulnerability.

This report provides insights into the causes of disaster risk, by exploring what people currently value and highlighting the trade-offs and choices that lead to our current levels of vulnerability. Reducing or mitigating disaster risk and vulnerability may require all stakeholders to change ways of thinking and behaving and will of necessity require collaboration with all sectors. Most importantly, reducing risk requires beginning with the circumstances and priorities of communities.

The report highlights that increased skill, capability and effort are needed to effectively engage with diverse communities (culturally, linguistically, geographically and socio-economically) to exchange experiences and wisdom.

## 1.5 The broader policy landscape

The broader human rights and social inclusion policy landscape reinforces the need for inclusive approaches to community engagement for disaster resilience. A range of legislative instruments shape societal values, principles and actions that need to be reflected in community engagement processes. These include:

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004*.

The Human Rights Commission also has designated Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice and Commissioners for Children.

### Gender and Disaster Pod Addressing domestic violence in disasters through implementing national guidelines.

Gender issues are known to compound the damaging effects of disaster on survivors. The *Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines* were developed collaboratively as part of the 2016 All on Board project which aimed to reduce the compounding effects of gender on disaster impact through the development of national guidelines on gender and emergency to fill a gap in Australian knowledge, policy and practice.

[www.genderanddisaster.com.au/info-hub/national-gem-guidelines](http://www.genderanddisaster.com.au/info-hub/national-gem-guidelines)

## 1.6 Recognising vulnerability through community engagement

### Key terms: systemic vulnerability and vulnerability

The UNDRR defines **vulnerability** as ‘the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards’.

‘Vulnerability is nested within and dependent on systems that are also vulnerable due to their limited redundancy and high interconnectivity’.

*Profiling Australia's Vulnerability: The interconnected causes and cascading effects of systemic disaster risk* (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2018).

Inclusive approaches to community engagement for disaster resilience help to address systemic vulnerabilities. Vulnerability to disasters arises from variations in:

- geographic location and hazard exposure
- ability to access and pay for goods and services
- personal and social relationships
- connections to culture, history and the environment
- willingness and ability to participate in social or political processes
- community cohesion and connections
- physical, emotional and mental health
- provision and distribution of government and business services
- people's access to information and services, including online resources
- understanding and awareness of vulnerabilities.

Vulnerability can vary depending on the presence and interplay of these personal and systemic factors. The consequences of any disaster may be more pronounced if the needs of individuals with specific support requirements are not met. For example, if the support and equipment provided to a person by their community or neighbourhood become unavailable during a time of crisis, their vulnerability may significantly increase. Similarly, if transport is interrupted or unavailable, the ability to evacuate is compromised.

While partners and communities can identify and address systemic and localised vulnerabilities, predetermining who is at greater or lesser risk before or during a disaster can be complex. Those who have

specific needs may require greater assistance to prepare for or recover from a disaster. However, if support needs are met and people are well informed and prepared, they may be no more vulnerable than others and could potentially provide support to others in their community.

### Reducing vulnerability through inclusive community engagement

#### Hume City Council's English and Emergencies – Learn and Prepare

English and Emergencies – Learn and Prepare is a training package designed to build the knowledge and capacity of English as an additional language for students to respond appropriately and effectively in emergencies. The impetus for this program arose due to local emergencies, such as industrial fires, as well as the increasing risk of grassfires, heatwaves and thunderstorm asthma within Hume City.


### Reducing vulnerability through inclusive community engagement

#### Disability inclusive disaster risk reduction (DIDRR)

The Queensland Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors partnered with the Centre for Disability Research and Policy at The University of Sydney, the Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) and the Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) to better support community members with disability to prepare for disaster.

Together they are engaging community stakeholders from the disability, community and emergency services sectors in the collaborative co-design of DIDRR tools and resources to support people with disability in their preparation and planning for emergencies.

[www.collaborating4inclusion.org/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction/](http://www.collaborating4inclusion.org/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction/)



## Chapter 2: Principles of community engagement for disaster resilience

This chapter presents national principles of community engagement for disaster resilience. These principles are intended to guide all sectors, partners and stakeholders in their efforts to engage with communities to enhance disaster risk reduction and resilience outcomes. They are also intended to guide communities as they engage with partners and stakeholders. These principles are complementary to the *National Principles for Disaster Recovery*.

1	<p><b>Place the community at the centre</b></p> <p>Effective community engagement is responsive, flexible and recognises the community as the central reference point for planning, implementing and measuring success in any engagement process. Inclusive, respectful and ethical relationships between engagement partners and the community must guide every stage of the engagement process.</p>
2	<p><b>Understand the context</b></p> <p>Effective community engagement requires partners to develop a strong understanding of the unique history, values, diversity, dynamics, strengths, priorities and needs of each community.</p> <p>It is also important to understand the environmental, political, or historical context that surrounds any hazard, emergency event or disaster.</p>
3	<p><b>Recognise complexity</b></p> <p>Effective community engagement considers the complex and dynamic nature of hazards, disaster risk and emergency events and the diverse identities, histories, composition, circumstances, strengths and needs of communities and community members.</p> <p>Because of this complexity, effective community engagement to build disaster resilience is an evolving process that requires ongoing investment.</p>
4	<p><b>Work in partnership</b></p> <p>Effective community engagement requires a planned and coordinated approach between the community and partners at every stage of the process. Potential issues arising from any imbalance in power, information or resources between the community and partners will be proactively managed during the process.</p>
5	<p><b>Communicate respectfully and inclusively</b></p> <p>Community engagement is built on effective communication between the community and partners that recognises the diverse strengths, needs, values and priorities of both community members and partners.</p>
6	<p><b>Recognise and build capability</b></p> <p>Effective community engagement recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capability and capacity to reduce disaster risk and increase resilience.</p>



## Chapter 3: Approaches to community engagement

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents broad guidance on five approaches to community engagement and different methods that can be used to engage. It provides the core elements of any community engagement process that aims to build disaster resilience.

Table 1 presents five approaches to community engagement. For each approach, it summarises the relationship between a partner and a community, expectations for how each partner participates in the process and examples of engagement actions and activities. It also describes different methods of engagement and provides practical examples that align with each of these approaches.

One approach is not necessarily better than any other, and each approach may be appropriate in different circumstances and at different times in the engagement process, depending on:






- the local context
- the level and previous experience of hazard risk
- the purpose and goals of the engagement
- the time and resources available

- the power and level of investment the community and partners have in the decisions to be made and the actions to be taken
- local community and organisational capacity and capability to act
- existing or desired levels of influence over the situation, or the decisions to be made.

Different forms of engagement can be used in each approach to community engagement. These forms are set out in Table 2 and are useful at various times for relevant approaches of any community engagement process. For example, information can be shared between communities and partners to increase understanding in any approach to community engagement. Similarly, consultation can be used to elicit opinions and perspectives across all approaches to community engagement.



**Table 1. Approaches to community engagement for disaster resilience**

Who leads the process	 Partner designs and delivers to community	 Partner leads with community input	 Community and partner work together	 Community leads with partner support	 Community designs and delivers
<b>Basis of engagement</b>	Partner provides community with information, options, solutions or services for a given situation or issue.	Partner provides leadership to community. Community provides input to the process.	Community and partner form a partnership. They co-design and develop options and solutions.	Community provides leadership to partner. Partner provides input to the process.	Community designs, decides and implements all actions. Minimal or no engagement necessary from any partner.
<b>Stated or implied, contract between external partner and community</b>	Partner understands the issue or situation, provides community with what they need and keeps community informed through the process.	Partner provides guidance, listens to community concerns and issues and takes them into account. Community input is considered necessary to ensure success.	Both community and partner bring expertise to the relationship. Mutual participation or collaboration contribute to success.	Community understands its own context and situation. Partner offers expertise and knowledge. This input is offered to support community-led action.	Community has a thorough understanding of its own context and situation and the hazards that may affect them. Community will ask for support when and if needed. External organisations may not be aware of projects at all.
<b>Methods of engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Information sessions</li> <li>• Training and seminars</li> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Letter box drops</li> <li>• Door knocks</li> <li>• Online instruction videos or information</li> <li>• Traditional media</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Consultations</li> <li>• Online or analogue surveys</li> <li>• Partner-led workshops and focus groups</li> <li>• Partner-led projects</li> <li>• Traditional media</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-chaired committees and working groups</li> <li>• Deliberative, participative and co-led workshops and focus groups</li> <li>• Online collaborative spaces</li> <li>• Shared research projects</li> <li>• Collaborative community-based projects</li> <li>• Traditional media</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Seminars</li> <li>• Consultations</li> <li>• Forums</li> <li>• Online or analogue surveys</li> <li>• Community-led workshops and focus groups</li> <li>• Community-led projects</li> <li>• Informal conversations</li> <li>• Traditional media</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Information sessions</li> <li>• Training and seminars</li> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Letter box drops</li> <li>• Door knocks</li> <li>• Online instruction videos or information</li> <li>• Community-led working groups</li> <li>• Community-led projects</li> <li>• Traditional media</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>
<b>Examples of actions or activities that reflect methods</b>	Briefings by specialists in disaster preparation, response or recovery. Information based public safety campaigns.	Partner-led planning and recovery focus groups and workshops. Partner-led surveys and feedback sessions.	Collaborative disaster planning and preparation projects. Joint working groups to implement particular projects.	Community-led planning processes, recovery committees, meetings and projects.	Community-led, resourced and implemented recovery processes and projects.

**NB: Many of the methods of engagement can be either online, face to face, or both.**

**Table 2. Forms of community engagement**

Form of engagement	What does it involve?
<b>Information</b>	Information is shared between communities and partners to increase understanding. This information is considered in subsequent decisions and actions.
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is information relevant, timely, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent, accessible to diverse audiences?</li> <li>• Information can be provided in one direction or two-way.</li> <li>• Key messages can be repeated as often as is necessary for the audience to be able to absorb the information.</li> </ul>	
<b>Consultation</b>	Consultation involves providing opportunities for opinions to be heard so that a number of perspectives influence decisions and action.
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is sufficient time allowed for the participants to consider an issue, to ask questions and provide input and for this feedback to be considered?</li> <li>• Opportunities are created so that many diverse voices can be heard.</li> <li>• Is information received from those consulted recorded, stored and used in a way that will enable the community to continually access it?</li> <li>• Advise those consulted about how their input will be considered and how it will influence outcomes.</li> </ul>	
<b>Participation and collaboration</b>	Participation and collaboration occur when communities and partners work together to identify issues, develop solutions, discuss alternatives and support action.
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many ways to participate and participants have the opportunity to influence how they want to participate.</li> <li>• Opportunities are created for all members of the community and for partners to participate in discussions and actions.</li> <li>• Relationships are developed where partners and communities work together each contributing their expertise.</li> <li>• There is recognition and communication of the needs and interests of all participants.</li> <li>• The community is actively involved in decisions, planning and actions that potentially affect or interest them.</li> <li>• Effort is made to seek out and facilitate the involvement of all who are potentially affected by or interested in a particular issue, including people traditionally considered difficult to reach and engage.</li> </ul>	
<b>Community-led</b>	The community leads the process of working with any partners to identify issues, develop solutions, discuss alternatives and support action.
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leaders and members lead the engagement process, including the processes for making decisions, undertaking planning and taking action.</li> <li>• Partners bring their knowledge and expertise to the process to support community-led engagement.</li> </ul>	
<b>Community-empowered</b>	Communities understand their risks, accept responsibility and have the resources and the capacity to design and implement initiatives.
<b>Considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leaders and members have the authority to determine, plan and implement the engagement process, inviting partners or stakeholders to join as and when needed.</li> <li>• The community has the necessary resources, skills and capacities to determine their own processes.</li> <li>• Partners bring their knowledge and expertise to the process to support the community, if asked.</li> </ul>	

## Partner designed and delivered approach

### **Community Trauma Toolkit developed by the Australian National University, Emerging Minds and University of Queensland**

The Community Trauma Toolkit, developed by the Australian National University and Emerging Minds in consultation with the University of Queensland, is a comprehensive trauma-informed strength-based approach to educating key workforces and families about infant and child mental health in the context of a natural or man-made disaster. This toolkit was developed via extensive consultation with the audiences, disaster recovery and resilience organisations and experts and children and families with a lived experience of community trauma events.

Resources are freely available and aim to fill several gaps in the existing disaster preparedness, emergency management and post-emergency coordination sphere regarding infant and child mental health.

[www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/community-trauma-toolkit](http://www.emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/community-trauma-toolkit)

## Partner leading with community input approach

### **Building extreme weather resilience with the homeless community in Adelaide, Australian Red Cross**

People experiencing homelessness face significant challenges during extreme weather events. They can be both vulnerable and resourceful and when given the opportunity to contribute to their own resources and education, they can increase their community's physical and psychological preparedness to extreme weather events.

The Red Cross, Hutt St Centre and Central Queensland University together with members of the homeless community co-designed preparedness information for heat, extreme cold and storms in collaboration with emergency services and health professionals in the Adelaide metro area.

Through a series of open dialogue sessions between members of the homeless community, emergency services, health professionals and the Red Cross, information and resources were shared which enabled genuine collaboration with groups that had generally not been included in emergency planning or education development before.

Winter and summer preparedness kits, specifically tailored to the needs of the homeless community during extreme weather, were created by drawing upon the knowledge and experience of the homeless community. Educational posters were created with the help of volunteer graphic designers, drawing on the information and resources familiar to the community and building on that with other local expertise.

One popular and useful resource created was a 'city guide map' for people experiencing homelessness in the Adelaide metro area. Alongside homeless support services, the map detailed where to find cool places to take shelter in the summer heat, what areas were unsafe to camp or rest during winter and storms and included co-designed safety and preparedness messaging.

By including and building upon the homeless community's own resources and knowledge, the community was able to take ownership and lead how, when and where they received and shared preparedness information relevant to them in their unique environment.

Edited extract from Every, D; Pedler, A and Collyer-Braham, S 2020, Out of the Storm: extreme weather resilience for community homelessness, *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, January 2020 edition. Also The Australian Red Cross, Hutt St Centre and CQ University 2019, *Extreme Weather and Homeless Communities: How to build resilience within the community, A co-design practice guide*.

## Community and partner working together approach

### Country Fire Authority and Nhill Karen Community film *Prevention is Better than Cure*

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) partnered with the local Karen community in Nhill, Victoria to develop fire safety resources that are meaningful and culturally relevant to them, rather than simply translating publications. This involved identifying how best to communicate local fire safety concerns and restrictions to their community. It was decided that a film would best communicate this information.

Two workshops were hosted by the Nhill Learning Centre and this gave the time and space needed to ask questions of the Karen community and find out what advice was meaningful for them. It also gave CFA time – the Brigade, District and HQ – to come up with agreed simplified English messages about Total Fire Bans, the Fire Danger Period and Fire Restrictions.

Then using the Nhill Learning Centre's interactions with the Karen community through English classes and with key Karen community members, the script was refined until it was agreed upon by all involved. Although CFA checked the key messages, it was the local Karen community who led the film script development and scene ideas. They chose who acted in the film and it is all spoken in Karen with English subtitles. The film *Prevention is Better than Cure* is owned by the Karen community and it is theirs to share and distribute in their community.

## Partner leading with community input approach

### Tasmania Fire Service's Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods

TFS Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods is a multinational award-winning program. Building on a successful community development pilot 2009-2013, the program focuses on building a 'shared responsibility' approach to bushfire preparedness through recognising that individuals, communities and the Tasmania Fire Service all play a part.

The program's aim is to build resilience and capacity in bushfire prevention and preparedness in Tasmanian communities most at-risk to bushfire through a sustainable community development approach. Some of the community bushfire activities include:

- information sessions
- community forums
- workshops
- field days
- bushfire rehearsals
- women's programs
- bushfire ready neighbourhood groups
- and property assessments.

<https://www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/>

### Partner and community working together approach

#### **My Resilient Community project with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland Police Service and Moreton Bay Regional Council**

Through the My Resilient Community project, emergency services and communities work together using flexible engagement strategies to build resilience to disasters. The project enhances preparedness, response and recovery in the Brisbane City and Moreton Bay Regional Council areas and helps individuals identify the contribution they can make to community resilience.

<https://youtu.be/op8qPJtsYF4>

[www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-jan-2019-making-my-resilient-community-a-reality](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-jan-2019-making-my-resilient-community-a-reality)

### Community leads with partner support

#### **Redland City Council's Community Champions**

Redland City Council's Community Champions program is a joint initiative of the Redlands Coast Southern Bay Islands community and Redland City Council which enables a community-led response to potential disasters and emergency management. This initiative is considered the first of its kind in Queensland and challenges the traditional view of community engagement and education programs. It exemplifies the benefits of community caring for itself by taking action before, during and after events. Community members are involved in planning, preparation, response and recovery for their community in partnership with disaster management leaders and agencies.

<https://www.redlandsdisasterplan.com.au/community-champions/>

## 3.2 The community engagement process

Community engagement can be initiated at any time by a:

- national, state, territory or local government or agency
- non-government, not-for-profit or 'for purpose' group or organisation
- local, regional, national or international private sector company or business
- philanthropic organisation or individual
- community group or leader approaching others in their own community
- community group or leader approaching another community
- community group, member or leader approaching a partner to seek their participation in a community engagement process.

When engaging communities, it is important to invite a diverse range of community members, leaders and groups to ensure varied and representative views. The complexity and diversity of communities requires a unique and tailored approach to each engagement process or program. This means there is an element of uncertainty about how each engagement process will unfold. Regardless of who

initiates the process, the community's profile, geographic location, or the scale or stage of a disaster the core elements of engagement are:

- understand the community/communities
- establish and strengthen relationships
- plan and prepare
- implement and monitor progress
- review and evaluate.

These elements do not necessarily occur in a linear way. They may occur sequentially or simultaneously, they may overlap or merge and time frames may differ for one or more elements depending on the circumstances and the engagement approach that is adopted. Different elements may be led by the community or the partner and may be repeated during any engagement process. Depending on the approach to community engagement that is used (see Table 1) the time, resources and focus given to each element may vary.

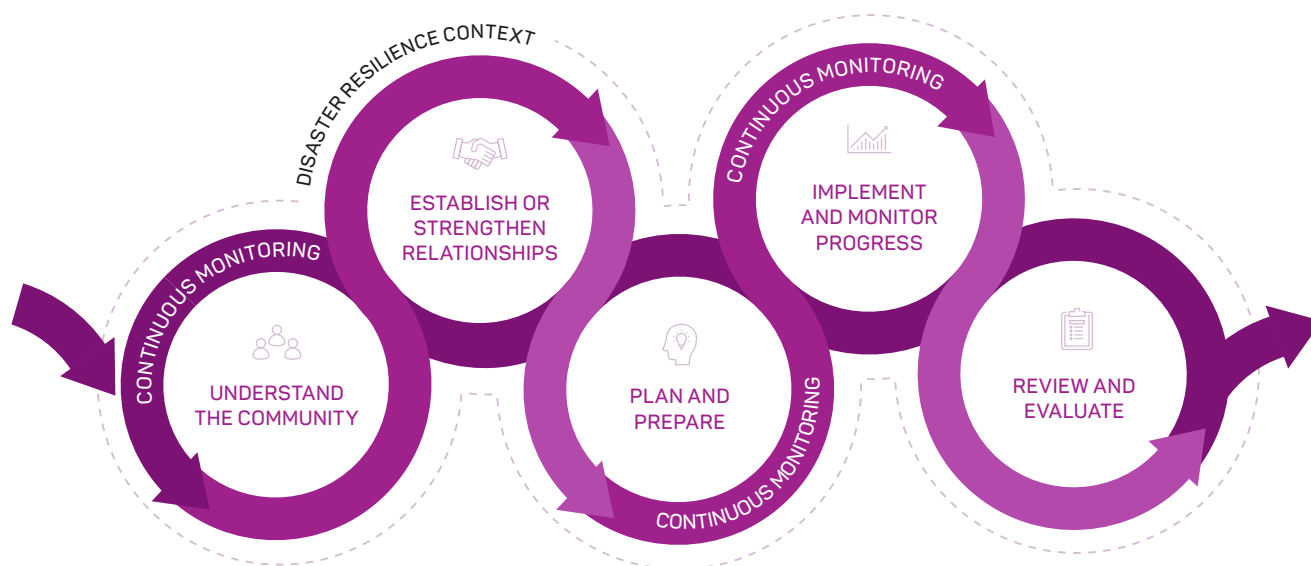


Figure 1: Community engagement process

### 3.2.1 Understand the community/ communities

Community engagement for disaster resilience will include time to learn about the community and understand its history, hazard risks and/or impacts, culture, characteristics, assets, strengths, aspirations, priorities, issues and needs. Information and understanding can be developed in the community and remotely through data collection. Information can be verified by meeting with community leaders and members. Information can be further verified and understanding enhanced by visiting or living in the community, forming relationships with community members, working alongside them and hearing their stories. Successful engagement is based on a genuine commitment to strengthen mutual understanding between communities and partners. Commitment to understanding is demonstrated when partners and communities:

- take the time to learn about each other
- are inclusive in language and behaviour to maximise access and participation by diverse individuals and groups
- demonstrate respect for community values, history and priorities
- demonstrate familiarity with and respect for protocols and issues relevant to each partner or group
- recognise the impacts of systemic barriers on the capacity of some individuals and groups to engage
- are curious to learn more, include new ideas, review progress and adjust the process in response to feedback
- are committed to planning and designing actions, based on genuine consideration and inclusion of the diverse views and perspectives of participants
- recognise that community engagement requires resources, skills and planning.

#### Partner understanding the needs of the community

##### Northern Territory Emergency Service Flood Safe Short Films.

The Northern Territory Emergency Service identified the need for an educational tool to inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about the importance of safety around floods and flood water. The campaign features several 'flood safe' short films with narrations available in English and six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages - Kriol, Arrernte, Kunwinku, Murrinh Patha, Warlpiri and Yolngu Matha.

[www.pfes.nt.gov.au/newsroom/2018/ntes-flood-safe-short-film](http://www.pfes.nt.gov.au/newsroom/2018/ntes-flood-safe-short-film)

Refer to companion document for further details: *Emergency Management Engagement of Flood Prone Communities*.

#### Develop a community profile

Developing a community profile can enhance understanding and includes researching and exploring:

- the history of the local area
- Indigenous / First Nations knowledge
- local population, culture and demographics
- existing social, community and organisational networks e.g. associations, faith-based groups, clubs, sporting groups, community groups, multicultural groups, small business
- the resources (human, economic, environmental, information) available to the community (internally or externally)
- the assets and strengths that exist in the community (human, social, economic, environmental, or part of the physical or community infrastructure)
- the hopes, aspirations and priorities of the community
- the hazards that exist in and around the community and the level of associated risk
- the level of community awareness of these hazards
- previous community requests for assistance or risk reduction action
- previous local emergency management incidents
- stories and previous experiences from local emergency services.



A community profile is enhanced when diverse community members provide important information and data and barriers to their participation are removed. It takes time to include and understand a range of community perspectives, histories and knowledge. Actively seek and listen to voices of diverse community members and groups and remember to ask, 'who is not at the table?'.

Access a range of different sources to cross check data and consider additional perspectives. Learn about local protocols that need to be honoured during the community engagement process. Status, authority, tradition, obligations and power structures can be different in each community.

### Data collection

Government and community agencies collect data and information that is also useful when developing a community profile. Some of the major agencies are:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- Local government authorities
- Regional development organisations
- Commonwealth and state offices of multicultural affairs
- The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
- Migrant Resource Centres and migrant service agencies
- Ethnic Communities Councils (in each state)
- Peak disability organisations
- Other peak community organisations
- Research organisations e.g. Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC), Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- The Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia

**For links to these organisations see *Further Resources* companion document.**

The protocols that work in one community will not necessarily work in another. Consider the following questions:

- Are there processes that need to be undertaken before individuals are selected as 'representatives' of their community to participate in the planning and implementation of community engagement processes and activities?
- Are there characteristics such as gender, age, wellbeing, faith, or community role that will influence who is most appropriate to instigate or lead the engagement for the community or the partner?
- Do leaders or Elders in the community have a role in granting permission or providing guidance and direction for the involvement of specific community members or groups?

### 3.2.2 Establish and strengthen relationships

Strong, positive relationships between community and partner are essential to successful community engagement. It takes time to establish and strengthen relationships. This can be challenging if a partner is not located within or close to the community, or there has been previous instances of poor relationships. However, engagement can occur effectively over long distances where communities and partners have sufficient commitment, trust, skill and access to online communication and engagement platforms.

Important considerations for establishing and maintaining positive relationships include:

- seeking agreement at the planning stage and establishing clear goals, objectives and intended outcomes
- confirming the availability and commitment of appropriate resources and time
- establishing effective channels for regular communication and feedback
- identifying and facilitating opportunities for participants to share, develop and apply skills and knowledge in disaster resilience
- developing and implementing processes to monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of the activities, with a clear focus on measurement of agreed outcomes
- sharing and celebrating success together.

Both community and partner may identify additional learning or development needs as their relationship develops and the community engagement process unfolds. The community may identify the need to learn more about disaster risk reduction or resilience, leadership development or business skills. Likewise, partners may need to learn more about significant values and events in the community.

### 3.2.3 Plan and prepare

Effective community engagement requires careful, collaborative planning and preparation. and reflects a detailed understanding of the local context.

Planning includes developing the following:

- a strong understanding of local issues, context and community needs and aspirations
- a shared purpose for the community engagement process
- actions and activities to achieve the goals, objectives and outcomes
- agreed roles and responsibilities
- anticipated resource requirements (e.g. human, financial, equipment, facilities and information)
- a financial management plan or budget
- clear implementation timelines including significant milestones
- a risk management plan
- a learning and development plan
- a communications or media plan
- an agreed framework for monitoring progress, evaluating success and measuring outcomes (including performance indicators or measures, clear data and information requirements).

A program logic framework can be used as a tool to map out goals, objectives and outcomes.

**For further information on program logic refer to Chapter 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation as well as the *Program logic* companion document.**

Planning and preparation for community engagement should be flexible and adaptable to account for unexpected and unforeseen changes and respond to feedback from participants. Unforeseen or overlooked community leaders and groups, interests and resources may emerge during a community engagement process and unexpected obstacles or difficulties may arise.

**For further information on unexpected obstacles and difficulties see *Practitioners guide: understanding and addressing challenges in community engagement* companion document.**

For planning and preparation to be flexible and adaptable:

- short-term arrangements can be established around specific engagements, such as the development of an evacuation centre plan, the formation of a local working group, or plans for a disaster risk reduction activity or exercise
- long-term arrangements should be established to identify broader aspirations and intentions for the community, to manage large scale project elements, or to look at long-term issues
- emergency management planning committees should include a mix of short-term, fixed-term, casual and formalised representation to engage different people and skill sets at different times
- accessing existing local community relationships and groups can occur in structured or in less structured ways
- specific interest or expert individuals and groups can provide input at specific times, rather than being involved throughout the entire process.

**Further information on planning can be found in *Emergency Planning* (AIDR 2020).**

### 3.2.4 Implement and monitor progress

Agreed actions or activities may be undertaken by the community and partners working together, or by each taking responsibility for separate activities or projects. Successful implementation is more likely if community leaders or groups are involved throughout the process.

When implementing community engagement actions or activities, consider:

- how diverse individuals and groups are included or invited, how accessible different settings and times are for a variety of participants and who is not being heard
- whether uniforms are desirable or appropriate during community engagement events or activities, as uniforms can be intimidating for some groups
- how local protocols will be honoured and reflected throughout implementation
- significant dates or events that may reduce or impact participation by the local community or partners

- the appropriateness and neutrality of venues or community premises to increase community confidence, trust and active participation in meetings or activities.

Community engagement programs and projects should monitor progress towards the achievement of agreed objectives throughout implementation. Monitoring should incorporate the perspectives and experiences of a variety of participants and community members and plans should be adjusted accordingly. Knowledge and learning generated from the process itself can also be monitored: about the community, partners, ideas that are generated, what works well, problems that arise, things that did not work well and valuable ways of working or supporting the community. Monitoring implementation can make a valuable contribution to longer-term capability building within the community and support other communities by contributing to the growing evidence base developed from many community engagement processes.

### 3.2.5 Review and evaluate

Regular review and evaluation against a clear framework are essential to understand what has been achieved throughout the community engagement process.

Review and evaluation of community engagement could include the following elements:

- developing a program logic
- taking a 'baseline' measure against which to measure outcomes
- having clear and measurable performance indicators or objectives
- implementing ongoing learning cycles
- collecting data and evidence
- conducting analysis
- reporting

**Further guidance related to monitoring, review and evaluation is provided in Chapter 4.**



## Chapter 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation

This chapter emphasises the importance of planning for review and evaluation, having a clear logic that focuses on outcomes and results, monitoring throughout implementation and gathering and analysing data and evidence in order to contribute to shared learning and a growing evidence base.

## 4.1 Planning for review and evaluation

Effective planning for review and evaluation occurs at the outset of any community engagement program or process. By planning for review and evaluation community leaders, members and all partners and stakeholders are able to:

- clarify and agree on the purpose and objectives of the community engagement
- clarify and share expectations and aspirations for the community engagement
- clarify and agree on the methods of delivery of the community engagement
- clarify and agree on the desired change, impact or results from the engagement
- clarify and agree on the most suitable monitoring and evaluation processes given the purpose and objectives of the engagement
- discuss and agree on the most suitable data collection processes
- learn from the engagement process and agree how these lessons learned will contribute to ongoing adjustments to the engagement
- contribute to the growing evidence base to inform developments in community engagement for disaster resilience.

## 4.2 Measuring outcomes and results

### 4.2.1 Program logic

A program logic is a representation of how a community engagement process should work and what it should achieve i.e. what will change if the engagement is successful. The program logic will guide project planning, implementation and evaluation by identifying agreed outcomes and outputs, specific engagement activities and presenting benefits in the short, medium and long term for the community and partners. The program logic provides a basis for the design of monitoring, review and evaluation processes. It enables the partners in any community engagement process to identify and agree what needs to be collected or measured, the most appropriate data collection methods, who is responsible for collecting the data, the progress to be measured at each milestone and the final outcomes to be evaluated.

Refer to the *Program Logic Framework* companion document for further guidance.

### 4.2.2 Questions for evaluation

Depending on the focus of the evaluation, questions could explore the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and/or sustainability of the community engagement process. The questions will identify what data is to be collected in order to measure performance and/or outcomes and to explore the learning and adaptation that may have occurred. Questions might include:

- How effective were the elements of the community engagement process?
- Did the actions reach the intended audience or target group?
- Did the intended audience or target group change behaviours or understanding?
- Did the intended audience or target group improve connections and relationships?
- Did the intended audience or target group build trust and confidence?
- Did the intended audience or target group achieve the specific change that was desired?
- How successfully have partners and community members been able to participate in the community engagement process?

The challenge becomes how to review and evaluate the contributions of community engagement to the broader goal of enhancing disaster resilience. The long-term outcomes in any program logic will therefore need to describe the success of a community engagement process as having enhanced resilience in an agreed way. It may include elements of enhanced:

- awareness and knowledge
- trust and relationship
- community participation
- community agency
- disaster preparation and mitigation actions
- community recovery and resilience
- overall learning about any aspect of resilience.

The highest level outcomes will ask whether the community engagement process has empowered communities to reduce their disaster risk and increase their disaster resilience in ways that are regularly reviewed and sustainable over time. High level questions might be:

- How has the community's resilience or ability to adapt to future disasters improved as a result of the community engagement process?
- How has the community's disaster risk been reduced and how will this reduction be maintained?

If community engagement activities are being carried out in the context of recovery, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs and National Disaster Recovery Monitoring and Evaluation Database are tools that can assist to plan an evaluation. Community engagement practitioners can also contribute to the database.

For further information on the AIDR National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs and National Disaster Recovery Monitoring and Evaluation Database see:  
[www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-recovery-monitoring-and-evaluation](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-recovery-monitoring-and-evaluation)

### 4.2.3 Performance indicators

Measuring performance and achievement against desired outcomes indicates whether the outcomes achieved are consistent with the original purpose and objectives and whether the actions taken have achieved the desired result or improvement. Performance indicators are best developed when community is placed at the centre.

Performance indicators may include measuring:

- the level of community satisfaction through structured feedback strategies such as interviews and questionnaires
- the capacity and capability of communities to participate in formal disaster risk reduction and resilience arrangements
- the capacity and capability of communities to undertake risk reduction activities and resilience building projects.

In order to measure progress or improvement, it is necessary to take a baseline measure before the community engagement processes commence. This enables that progress or outcomes achieved as a result of the community engagement can be more clearly demonstrated. For example, a survey of how confident the community members feel about an issue before the community engagement process can be compared to the results from a survey after the community engagement process. This will indicate whether confidence has increased, decreased or stayed the same as a result of the community engagement activities.

### 4.2.4 Ongoing learning cycles

Learning cycles (also known as action learning) make a valuable contribution to monitoring, review and evaluation. Learning cycles should occur regularly throughout the community engagement process and at agreed and regular points in time. Community members and partners ask themselves questions about

the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of what is happening, with reference to the original plans and agreed outcomes. They share their views, discuss the ramifications of this information and include input from all stakeholders. Community members and partners can then identify what information and data is being collected, what is being achieved or demonstrated by the information and data and what additional data or information needs to be collected. This leads to shared learning and the community engagement process can then be adapted and adjusted accordingly. Learning cycles contribute to improved community engagement processes in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and outcomes achieved as a result of a community engagement process.

### Ongoing learning

#### Ten years of New South Wales Rural Fire Service Prepare.Act.Survive Campaigns

NSW Rural Fire Service developed a multi-channel public safety campaign designed to increase risk recognition of bushfire and introduce an awareness of tools available to support preparedness including alert levels, fire danger ratings and bushfire survival plans. Over the past ten years, the campaign has delivered a significant improvement in preparation and continues to evolve and respond to changing community expectations and the latest research and insights.

The campaign began with a baseline level of 35% living in bushfire prone areas having a bushfire survival plan in 2009. This has steadily and sustainably increased to 70% in 2018 and a peak of 80% during the 2019-20 bushfire season.

## 4.3 Data and evidence

Monitoring, review and evaluation involves collecting data about the community engagement process and the outcomes achieved. Any data collection process must comply with ethical conduct in human research standards and protocols. The data can be qualitative (opinions, experiences and case studies) or quantitative (numbers and statistics). It may be useful to collect both qualitative and quantitative data about a process.

**Table 3. Qualitative and quantitative example questions**

Qualitative	Quantitative
In what ways were participants satisfied with their engagement?	How many people or groups participated in the process or in particular activities?
What did participants think the most valuable and effective outputs were and why?	How many outcomes met the community's expectations?
What did participants think the most valuable and effective outcomes were and why? What stories, experiences and comments did participants share?	How many participants identify as belonging to particular groups e.g. gender, age, employment status, industry segment or sector of the economy?
What did participants learn and/or contribute in the engagement process?	Did participation rates increase or decrease during the engagement process?

It can be particularly powerful to develop case studies or highlight examples of success to provide information and demonstrate successful community engagement processes. After collection and analysis and subject to appropriate compliance with data privacy and, in some cases, research ethics, data becomes evidence that can be documented and reported. It may be shared with other organisations and communities in order to share learnings and outcomes or published to share the findings more broadly.

The National Disaster Recovery Monitoring and Evaluation Database contains evaluation reports from past disaster events. It can be used by practitioners as a source of data and evidence in the context of community recovery.

Further information about monitoring and evaluation can be found in:

- *A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs* (2018) [www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-recovery-monitoring-and-evaluation](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-recovery-monitoring-and-evaluation)
- National Disaster Recovery Monitoring and Evaluation Database [www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-recovery-monitoring-and-evaluation](http://www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-recovery-monitoring-and-evaluation)
- Taylor, Johnston and Ryan 2019, *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Toolkit – Mapping approaches to community engagement for preparedness in Australia*, BNHCRC
- Parsons and Foster 2020, *Reimagining program monitoring and evaluation for disaster resilience outcomes*, BNHCRC
- Markiewicz and Patrick 2016, *Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks*, Sage: Los Angeles.



## Collection and analysis of data and evidence

### Department of Fire and Emergency Services WA Argyle-Irishtown report

This report provides the results of post-incident research undertaken by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services WA Community Engagement Directorate following the Gwindinup fire in Argyle-Irishtown in January 2017, including a survey of Argyle-Irishtown undertaken in April 2017 and a community forum in May 2017.

### Argyle-Irishtown community survey findings

The results demonstrate the uptake and outcomes of the Bushfire Ready program in Argyle-Irishtown, provide details on resident's planning and preparation for bushfire and outline community actions and lessons learned from the Gwindinup fire. Survey results are compared to post-incident research following the Parkerville fire in 2014 (McLennan, 2014) and previous case study research following the Irishtown fire in 2015 (Viv Warren Consulting, 2016).

## Review, collection and analysis of data and evidence

### IGEM Victoria's review of connecting and collaborating with the private sector and community organisations

The review's objective was to assess the effectiveness of Victoria's emergency management sector in connecting and collaborating with the private sector and community organisations.

The review highlights the importance of collaboration in emergency management and identifies:

- issues relevant to sector organisations in working with private sector and community organisations.
- examples of cross-sector collaboration
- the challenges experienced by sector organisations in collaborating with private sector and community organisations.

The report also outlines a number of observations for future consideration:

- Greater attention to the strategic and organisational competencies and personnel skills that are highlighted in the review will improve the effectiveness of collaborative emergency management activity before, during and after emergencies.
- Effective connections and collaborations across sectors will likely support increased self-reliance, reinforced community resilience and the achievement of better community outcomes.

[www.igem.vic.gov.au/reports-and-publications/igem-reports/review-of-connecting-and-collaborating-with-the-private](http://www.igem.vic.gov.au/reports-and-publications/igem-reports/review-of-connecting-and-collaborating-with-the-private)



# Appendix A: Glossary

It is important to have a common understanding and definition for the many terms in use across the disaster risk reduction and resilience sectors and in each jurisdiction across Australia. Key terms relevant to community engagement, emergency management and disaster resilience used in this handbook are provided (alphabetically) as follows:

## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines CALD by three variables:

- country of birth
- language other than English spoken at home
- english language proficiency.

Individuals from a CALD background are those who identify as having specific cultural or linguistic affiliation by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry, ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, or language spoken at home, or because of their parent's identification on a similar basis. This group may include long-standing communities and new arrivals.

## Community

This handbook works with the following definition of a community:

'A social group with a commonality of association and generally defined by location, shared experience, or function and with a number of things in common, such as culture, heritage, language, ethnicity, pastimes, occupation, or workplace.' (AIDR Glossary, 2019).

This definition of community therefore includes:

- geographic communities of place can include regions, towns, neighbourhoods or streets
- communities of circumstance created when the same issue or emergency event affects a group of people who might otherwise have remained unknown to one another
- those who share sets of social connections and relationships
- communities of interest who share an interest or regular activity
- those who share a common faith and the cultural or historic traditions and expressions of that faith
- virtual communities who primarily communicate with one another through digital and online platforms.

It is important to note that these communities frequently overlap and are dynamic. Individuals may belong to more than one community at any given time and their participation and membership of these communities may change over time. Community membership may be short term or members may remain strongly connected to one another over entire lifetimes and even generations.

## Community development

The United Nations defines community development as 'a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.' Community development applies to the practice of civic leaders, activists, citizens and professionals to strengthen and build resilience in communities. Community development is also understood as a professional discipline and is defined by the International Association for Community Development as 'a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings'.

## Disability

17.7% of the Australian population live with disability. Disability can be visible or non-visible, with a higher prevalence of non-visible disability in Australia. Disability can be inherited or acquired (due to illness or injury) and can be temporary or permanent.

The breadth of impairments and medical conditions covered by the DDA are set out below:

- Physical - affects a person's mobility or dexterity
- Intellectual - affects a person's abilities to learn
- Mental Illness - affects a person's thinking processes
- Sensory - affects a person's ability to hear or see
- Neurological - affects the person's brain and central nervous system,
- Learning disability
- Physical disfigurement
- Immunological - the presence of organisms causing disease in the body.

To be deemed a disability, the impairment or condition must impact daily activities, communication and/or mobility, and has lasted or is likely to last 6 months or more.

People with disability are part of every section of our community: men, women and children; employers and employees; students and teachers; indigenous and non-indigenous; customers; and citizens. No two people with the same disability experience their disability in the same way.

The only thing that distinguishes a person with disability is they may require some form of adaptation/adjustment to enable them to do certain things in the same way as people without disability.

<https://www.and.org.au/pages/what-is-a-disability.html>

## Disaster resilience

Resilience is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of such hazards in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management (UNDRR, 2017).

A resilient community has the capacity and capability to identify and mitigate hazards and risks, absorb the effects of disruptive events, adapt or transform in anticipation or in response to those disruptive events and return to a functioning state.

A resilient system arises from the ways that resilience is valued and prioritised by communities, governments, business and others, reflected through their decisions, actions and activities.

## Diversity

Diversity refers to the ways in which people differ due to their age, caring responsibilities, cultural background, disability, gender, Indigenous background, sexual orientation, socio-economic background (or social identity) and their professional, education, work experiences and organisational role (or professional identity).

It is important to understand intersectionality in order to understanding diversity. People may identify with more than one diversity label. It is important to treat people with respect regardless of these characteristics rather than spend unnecessary time trying to determine which 'diversity label' best applies.

## Evaluation

An evaluation is a structured, evidence-based analysis that draws together data (quantitative and/or qualitative) to answer questions about the effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness, impact and sustainability of an intervention (in this case a community engagement process), using clear criteria and standards for assessing the success of the program against particular desired outcomes. Evaluation can be conducted throughout the engagement process by monitoring progress and achievements (formative evaluation) or at the end of the process by assessing outcomes and achievement when compared to the original goals or objectives (summative evaluation). If conducted in a collaborative way, evaluation can also provide the opportunity for those involved to question and reassert the need for the program, or to adjust and adapt the approach based regular assessment of its effectiveness (developmental evaluation).

## Inclusion

An inclusive society is defined as a society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, human rights and freedoms and the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity. Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people (e.g. different ages, genders, backgrounds etc.) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their lives, as well as the life of their community.

## Indigenous

An Indigenous person is someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which they live or to which they belong. Indigenous people can have different views about whether they prefer to be referred to as Indigenous or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. It is always a good idea to ask individuals their preference and then abide by that. Indigenous peoples hold unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and possess invaluable traditional knowledge for the sustainable management of natural resources, having a special relation to and use of their traditional land, waters or territories. Ancestral lands, waters and territories are of fundamental importance for their physical and cultural survival as peoples.

## Monitoring

Monitoring is the continuous review and assessment of the community engagement process as it is being implemented. Monitoring is undertaken in order to understand how well the process is progressing and whether any adjustments need to be made to enhance its effectiveness. Monitoring regularly throughout the process of community engagement provides the opportunity for continuous improvement and adjustment to the engagement process.

## Social inclusion

The World Bank defines social inclusion as the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society – improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people, who are or might be disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society.

## Vulnerability

*Profiling Australia's Vulnerability* (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2018) bases its definition of vulnerability on that used by the UNDRR 'as the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards'.

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