



RESILIENCE THROUGH DISASTERS

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES BEFORE, DURING AND BEYOND DISASTERS

Community Sector Organisations (CSOs) play a crucial role in supporting people who are on low incomes or experiencing disadvantage before, during and throughout the long recovery phase following bushfires and other disasters. However, CSOs face many challenges in being able to effectively meet and respond to the needs of these vulnerable and at risk communities, particularly as the occurrence of natural disasters increases.

We call for Government to immediately implement the following recommendations to put the “community” back into “community-led” by acknowledging and utilising the immense knowledge and goodwill of local community leaders (formal and informal), spontaneous volunteers, and local CSOs.



Formally acknowledge and embrace the critical role Community Service Organisations play in the emergency management system including:

- Actively build partnerships between local Emergency Management (EM) and CSO leaders to better coordinate response, recovery and resilience activities, and value-add each sector's area of expertise and perspective;
- Ensure Representation of place based CSO's on Local Emergency Management Committees;
- Include CSO's in pre-season briefings and key communication strategies;
- Develop culturally-appropriate professional development strategies to upskill both CSO and EM staff and volunteers on roles and responsibilities in ongoing emergency management, resilience and recovery work;

Adequately resource CSOs to build their capability and capacity to ensure they, and their clients, are more resilient to, and can better respond to and recover from disasters including:

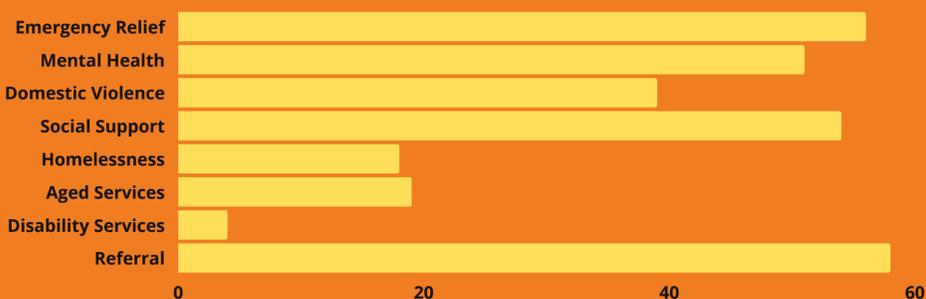
- Additional funding and Flexible Contingency Fund to manage surge capacity and meet demand for tailored and responsive social support services during and post-disaster;
- Ensure immediate financial compensation for CSOs affected by intensive unprecedented response and recovery efforts;
- Ensure CSOs are not penalised for failing to meet contractual obligations due to their participation in disaster response and recovery efforts.

Create and fund local community resilience hubs to:

- Lead resilience building, relief and recovery programs;
- Serve as a connector between community and government services;
- Develop partnerships with local CSOs and emergency management agencies which are resourced with ongoing funding.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE DISASTER SURVEY RESPONSE

A survey of Neighbourhood Centres was conducted in October 2020 to build an evidence base demonstrating the roles, responses and resilience of community organisations and Neighbourhood Centres through disaster.



INCREASED DEMAND & COSTS

Most of the increased demand on services was for information and referral, emergency relief, social support and mental health services.

The majority of those surveyed had cost increases in relation to financial, time and human resources, as well as indirect costs due to loss of volunteers, revenue from centre activities and emotional toll on staff.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

"We revised entry criteria, intake procedures, safety screening, working from home arrangements, new client contact arrangements, new team communication arrangements, increased and developed sharing of resources"

"We helped a group of NGOs set up a co-op for food relief"

Disasters have prompted organisations to develop innovative solutions

