

# Resilient Australia National Award 2022 winners

**Molly Price**

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience



© 2023 by the authors.  
License Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, Melbourne, Australia. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

The 23rd Resilient Australia Awards celebrated initiatives that inspire community connections and foster community resilience to disasters and emergencies. Initiatives came from schools, communities, local and state governments and business across Australia.

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Executive Director Dr Margaret Moreton opened the awards event. She said the awards are an important moment to champion resilience in our communities.

‘Australians continue to prove themselves to be resilient in the face of adversity – but we are not unbreakable.

‘Our work to build up and support the resilience of communities across Australia is never done, so it’s important we seize these moments to encourage each other and to share success,’ she said.

Coordinator-General of the National Emergency Management Agency Brendan Moon AM attended the event and presented the awards. Mr Moon commended the efforts of the national award finalists who displayed ‘wonderful examples of community resilience’.

‘Resilience building must become business as usual for all of us if we are going to be able to continue to have our communities function and flourish into the future. This is the clear message and this is the wonderful opportunity. And these are the wonderful achievements that we celebrate here today,’ he said.

## National Award

The National Resilient Australia Award was awarded to 2 finalists who excelled in their initiatives. The Multi Agency Community Resilience Films Project by the Northern Territory Emergency Service developed films in languages for remote communities that are at high risk of hazards occurring. Created for the Wugularr (Beswick), Kintore, Groote Eylandt, Wurrumiyana and Pirlangimpi communities, the films are narrated in the relevant local language with English subtitles. The topics and solutions are appropriate to the

issues occurring in the community, including health, first aid and the dangers of cyclones, floods and bushfires.

Safer Together Victoria also received the national award for the Community Based Bushfire Management (CBBM) project. A flagship project within the Victorian Government’s Safer Together program, CBBM is a bushfire risk reduction community engagement initiative that takes a place-based, community-development approach to working with community. With a long-term approach, CBBM communities can develop trust and respect, which results in meaningful conversations and mutually acceptable approaches to risk reduction. CBBM allows decisions made and actions taken to be truly community-based.

In 2022, the Queensland Department of Education Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aspirations Program (ATSIAP) afforded students a unique, rich learning experience by providing opportunities to investigate real-world disaster resilience challenges. This ‘GetReady! Disaster risk and preparedness in our community’ challenge was highly commended in the national category.

Sixty Queensland school students in years 10-12 teamed up to develop a communication plan and campaign material to inform a target audience in their local community about risks, preparedness and disaster resilience. Students participated in regional webinars and interviews with local emergency management experts to inform their communication plan.

## Suncorp Resilient Australia National Community Award

Suncorp sponsored the Resilient Australia National Community Award and Manager Government,



Safer Together Victoria accepted the Resilient Australia National Award from Brendan Moon.



Dan Kaggelis, Smithfield State High School, accepted the Resilient Australia National School Award from Brendan Moon.



Suncorp Manager Government, Public Policy & Sustainability, Corporate & Regulatory Affairs, Lachlan Rees, awarded Emma King, on behalf of VCOSS and ECCV, with \$5,000 for winning the Suncorp Resilient Australia National Community Award.

Public Policy & Sustainability, Corporate & Regulatory Affairs, Lachlan Rees, said Suncorp was proud to have been a part of the Resilient Australia awards since 2020.

‘When you go out to a community that’s been impacted by a disaster, there’s a common thread of resilience, of a community’s incredible capacity to band together in the face of, and following disasters.

‘This history of protecting what matters and a shared experience of recovery drives us to be there, supporting our customers and their communities soon after disaster strikes, and with them on that long road to recovery,’ he said.

The Suncorp Resilient Australia National Community Award was given to the Victorian Council of Social Services and Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria Multicultural Resilience Program, based in Melbourne. The program brought together multicultural communities and emergency management leaders

to learn from one another, helped strengthen community resilience and reduced the disruptive effects of COVID-19 in multicultural communities. It also increased mutual understanding and trust between multicultural communities and emergency management organisations. It is working toward greater cultural safety for all who work in and with emergency management organisations.

Harrington Crowdy Head Community Resilience Team was highly commended for their work to lead and support the community in efforts to build resilience following the 2019–20 bushfires and a major flood in March 2021 that threatened lives, homes and caused significant environmental and economic losses. Through research and community consultation, the Harrington Crowdy Head Community Resilience Team aims to grow community awareness and stronger community networks.

## National School Award

Tropical North Learning Academy Smithfield State High School, Cairns, won the National School Award for their initiative, Cairns in Your Hands. Cairns is vulnerable to high-risk hazards as well as the increasing effects of sea-level rise and climate change. It is essential to build resilience, sustainability and safety for the community and to provide youth with the critical thinking, collaborative and creative skills to solve future problems. The Cairns in Your Hands program aimed to empower the youth of Cairns through geographical inquiry and thinking skills to develop a coastal hazards adaptation plan for their city.

St Columba’s Memorial School in South Australia was Highly Commended for their project, Southern Yorke Peninsula First Aid for Kids. The initiative delivered age-appropriate first aid, disaster resilience and wellbeing sessions for over 350 primary school children and their teachers. The sessions covered basic first aid and supporting wellbeing after an emergency event, with each family receiving a first aid kit and a copy of the Red Cross Helping children and young people cope with crisis resource booklet.



Jeremy Miller, on behalf of AdaptWest, accepting the Resilient Australia National Local Government Award from Brendan Moon.



Alexandra Howard, Phoenix Australia, accepted the Resilient Australia National Mental Health and Wellbeing Award from Brendan Moon.



Bellingen Shire Council accepted the Resilient Australia National Local Government Award from Brendan Moon.

## National Local Government Award

There were 2 winners in the National Local Government Award category. The first was AdaptWest - on behalf of the cities of West Torrens, Charles Sturt and Port Adelaide Enfield, for AdaptNow! Changing for Climate Change. Built on a co-design process, the partnership sought to understand how diverse communities would respond in a crisis. They developed resources with community representatives, key agencies and businesses. They documented this process with a local filmmaker through interviews and storytelling to highlight messages of hope, connection and capacity building.

The second award was presented to Community-led Disaster Response by Bellingen Shire Council. As a regional community with limited services, Bellingen Shire Council knew they'd have to advocate and coordinate to support their community through the COVID-19 pandemic. Council brought together a local and vocal group of community and services for a response, focusing efforts on clinical support, community preparedness and resilience, information and business support.

## National Mental Health and Wellbeing Award

The winner of the Resilient Australia National Mental Health and Wellbeing Award was Phoenix Australia's Victorian Bushfire Recovery Project. It has helped equip more than 1,800 frontline workers, health professionals and community leaders to better support their community members' recovery from the 2020 summer bushfires, promote their resilience, as well as support the wellbeing of their teams and organisations.

After consultation, Phoenix Australia tailored and delivered a suite of online and in-person training and mentoring programs that aligned with a stepped-care approach to providing support after disaster. This approach allowed Phoenix Australia to upskill a diverse range of community members so they can, within their own community, provide the right support at the right time to match the individual's needs.

Mackillop Family Services program was highly commended for their Stormbirds program about disaster resilience mental health and wellbeing. As with other grief and trauma experiences, exposure to disaster has deleterious effects on mental health and wellbeing, substantially affecting children and young people's outcomes in the short and longer term. The Stormbirds program helps children to build an understanding of change and loss and grief, while developing skills in communication, decision-making and problem-solving.

Also highly commended was South West Hospital and Health Service for the South West Queensland Birdie Calls Collaborative Project. This initiative features the characters Birdie and Mr Frog who visit libraries, playgroups and primary schools to spread stories of resilience, feelings and support through hard times including 'the virus', drought, storms, very hot days and fire. Birdie and Mr Frog encourage children to emulate their resilience through their stories of facing difficult times, recognising their feelings and how things improve through the support of friends, family and community.



National Photography Award winner 'Cracked but never broken' by Rose-Anne Emmerton.

## National Photography Award

Finalists for the Resilient Australia National Photography Award were selected via a people's choice vote conducted through the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Facebook page. The winning image features on the cover of this edition of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*.

Rose-Anne Emmerton's winning image 'Cracked but never broken' depicts a volunteer who has recently attended a fatality, answering their pager for another call.

The highly commended image 'Contrast' by Johanna Mahon depicts the resilience of trees withstanding the blaze of a bushfire. They are burnt and covered in ash, but in months to come the bushland will regeminate and flourish again.



Highly commended photograph 'Contrast' by Johanna Mahon.



Highly commended photograph 'Autumn burning – a return to normality' by Andrew Haselden

Andrew Haselden was also highly commended for his photo 'Autumn burning – a return to normality'. It was taken at the end of a hazard reduction burn conducted in early autumn and shows the calm of the dying intensity of a fire which burnt in a heavily fuel loaded block. As the smoke clears and the sun shines through the newly burnt bush, it is with a quiet sense of relief that the crew once again happily pitch in to get the job done as a team.

Details of the 2022 Resilient Australia Awards finalists are at [www.aidr.org.au/resources/resilient-australia-national-awards-2022](http://www.aidr.org.au/resources/resilient-australia-national-awards-2022).