



Review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022
Opening Statement

To the Chair of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority,

Thank you for the opportunity to attend and give evidence at the public hearing, as part of the Committee's statutory review of the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022. We also appreciate the opportunity to proffer this opening statement to summarise: who we are; and our main views on the matter under consideration.

Who We Are

We are a team of university-based scholars and managers of non-government organisations, conducting a project that aims to **build resilient Australian communities**. Funded by the **James Martin Institute for Public Policy**, this project has involved engaging with communities affected by disasters – namely, communities in the Northern Rivers and South Western Sydney. The project has established the role of government and non-government organisations in fostering community resilience by facilitating social connectedness for vulnerable families. As such, we are well placed to contribute to the review of the **NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022**, the purpose of which is to determine whether: the policy objectives of the **Act** remain valid; and the terms of the **Act** remain appropriate for securing the objectives.

Our Main Views

To ultimately promote community resilience, it is recommended that the primary object and strategies to achieve this object, be revised as follows (amendments are in bold text for clarity):

promote community resilience in New South Wales through –

(a) social infrastructure...

by –

- (a) establishing the NSW Reconstruction Authority to facilitate community resilience in New South Wales through **social infrastructure**, prevention, preparedness and adaptation, and*
- (b) providing for the functions and powers of the NSW Reconstruction Authority, including functions and powers to –*
 - (i) facilitate **social infrastructure**, the protection, recovery and reconstruction of affected communities, and*
 - (ii) mitigate against the impact of potential disasters on communities, and*
 - (iii) improve the resilience and adaptability of affected communities in relation to potential disasters, including, for example, **via social infrastructure** and the betterment of affected communities, and*

Correspondingly, it is recommended that the terms of the **Act** be revised by:

- Defining community resilience to recognise its multifaceted nature
- Defining social infrastructure as follows:

social capital networks and community hubs that foster connection and reciprocity in and between communities, sustained through ongoing community development work that is equitable, builds social licence, and supports healing from trauma.

- Recognising that the effects associated with a disaster can be exacerbated by ongoing hardship
- Stipulating strategies that prioritise sustained community engagement – this might involve supporting and sustaining community hubs, which are driven by communities



As explicated in our submission, the rationale for these recommendations is as follows:

1. Community resilience and social infrastructure are closely linked concepts
2. Community resilience is a multifaceted social process
3. Disasters can be exacerbated by ongoing hardship
4. Sustained community engagement is essential for community resilience
5. Communities can benefit considerably when they drive and deliver their own recovery journeys following disaster

The recommendations presented in our submission will serve to strengthen the [NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022](#) to ultimately promote community resilience in New South Wales. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute further to this review and collaborate with the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Yours sincerely,

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