

REVIEW OF THE NSW RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY ACT 2022

Organisation: NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS)
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Submission

to the Review of the NSW Reconstruction
Authority Act 2022



NSW Council of Social Service

17 June 2024

About NCOSS

NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) is the peak body for non-government organisations in the health and community services sector in NSW. NCOSS works to progress social justice and shape positive change toward a NSW free from inequality and disadvantage. We are an independent voice advocating for the wellbeing of NSW communities. At NCOSS, we believe that a diverse, well-resourced and knowledgeable social service sector is fundamental to reducing economic and social inequality.

Acknowledgement of Country

NCOSS respectfully acknowledges the sovereign Custodians of Gadigal Country and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the rich cultures, customs and continued survival of First Nations peoples on Gadigal Country, and on the many diverse First Nations lands and waters across NSW.

We acknowledge the spirit of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and accept the invitation to walk with First Nations peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

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1. Context and Opening Comments

1.1 Purpose of the Review

The Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority has been established under section 93 of the *NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022* to assess whether the Act's policy objectives are still valid and if its terms remain appropriate to meet those objectives. The Committee will report by 28 November 2024.

The Committee Chair, Mr Clayton Barr MP, Member for Cessnock, has extrapolated as follows: "We want to make sure that the Authority is set up to effectively work with communities to prevent disasters. And, when disasters do happen, that the Authority has the legislative tools it needs to support communities to heal and rebuild. We owe it to the people of NSW that both the Act and the Authority are fit for purpose."¹

1.2 NSW Reconstruction Authority

The Reconstruction Authority aims to promote resilience to the impacts of disasters in NSW through disaster prevention, preparedness and adaptation, and recovery and reconstruction following disasters. It has four key functions:

- Mitigation and adaption, including public infrastructure, homes, and land use planning
- Local preparedness, including education and community information
- Community-centred recovery
- Long-term rebuilding and reconstruction

The functions of the Reconstruction Authority are set out in Division 2, Section 10(1) of the Act and are shown at Appendix 1 to this submission.

1.3 NSW Council of Social Service

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) is the peak body for the social services sector in NSW. With over 280 members and a wider network of organisations and individuals who share our values, we advocate to alleviate poverty and disadvantage in NSW. Our objectives include amplifying the experience of people affected by poverty and disadvantage, supporting a diverse, collaborative and innovative community sector, and forming constructive partnerships to influence change.

1.4 Disadvantage and disasters - the role of the social service sector

Over the past five years, the impacts of natural disasters and emergencies has been a significant focus for NCOSS, due in part to the significant and compounding impacts of disasters on already vulnerable population groups and individuals, and the services and organisations that support them.

The intersection of social disadvantage and disaster vulnerability is well established and well known to social services and community organisations. Through bushfires, COVID-19, floods and storms, we have seen the significant and disproportionate ways emergencies impact those most vulnerable - due to factors such as income, health and disability, age, pre-existing discrimination and social exclusion, geographic and social isolation. There are both direct impacts (e.g. trauma, displacement and loss

¹ Joint Select Committee on the Reconstruction Authority, Media Release, 22 May 2024.

experienced by individuals, families, organisations) and a wider set of social impacts (e.g. higher rates of domestic and family violence, mental health issues, housing insecurity, as evidenced in NCOSS's AfterShock series²).

In formal terms, our sector has a limited role in emergencies. However, the last five years have demonstrated that social services are very much involved before, during and after disasters. NCOSS has documented this through a series of reports and case studies.³ The significant contribution the social service sector makes to disaster management, preparedness and resilience is summarised in the attached resource 'Roles of NGOs in Disaster Management'.

1.5 NCOSS's disaster advocacy and projects

NCOSS's advice to the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority is informed by our work in supporting the sector through multiple, severe and overlapping emergencies and in contributing to a growing body of evidence about the impacts of disasters and the role played by community service organisations across all phases of disaster management. NCOSS has:

- actively engaged with a diverse range of social sector organisations, both peak bodies and service providers, regarding community and service impacts of disasters and barriers to effective response, recovery and preparedness;
- given voice to those on the frontline of community impacts, undertaking research and strategic advocacy, including by participating in engagement opportunities offered by the Reconstruction Authority and other NSW government agencies;
- supported frontline service organisations by developing and providing disaster-related information, resources, training, case studies and tools; and
- designed and led the Community Sector Disaster Capability and Resilience (CSDC) Project to showcase how place-based non-government organisations (NGOs) can strengthen local emergency management and preparedness systems and help build disaster risk reduction capabilities and the disaster readiness of communities, vulnerable groups and services.

Funded jointly by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments through the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund, the CSDC Project has been delivered in collaboration with the Local Community Service Association (LCSA) and NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec) and place-based community service organisations in four locations (Northern Rivers, Hawkesbury, South Coast and Southern NSW) covering seven NSW LGAs. The CSDC Project has aimed to strengthen the role and capabilities of local community service organisations in disaster risk reduction to better support the wellbeing and safety of vulnerable community members and to build a more collaborative, networked approach to disaster planning and preparedness. CSDC Local Projects have undertaken engagement to identify local disaster vulnerabilities, risks and strengths; delivered disaster preparedness capability building activities and resources; and strengthened engagement

² NCOSS, Aftershock Series, 2022, www.ncoss.org.au/policy-advocacy/policy-research-publications/aftershock-addressing-the-economic-and-social-costs-of-the-pandemic-and-natural-disasters-report-1-mental-health/

³ See for example, NCOSS (2022) The Other Frontline: the essential role of place-based NGOs during the Delta and Omicron COVID-19 outbreaks in NSW, www.ncoss.org.au/policy-advocacy/policy-research-publications/the-other-frontline/; Southern Cross University and NCOSS (2023), Community Sector involvement in Disaster Management, www.ncoss.org.au/policy-advocacy/policy-research-publications/southern-cross-university-report-cs-in-dm/; Building Resilience for Emergency Responses (2022), various case studies and recordings, www.ncoss.org.au/sector-hub/sector-resources/building-resilience-for-emergency-responses/

with government and emergency management to bring the sector's expert knowledge, skills and connections to disaster planning, response and recovery. Announced in February 2023, the CSDC ends on 30 June 2024.

1.6 NCOSS engagement with the NSW Reconstruction Authority

This submission is informed:

- NCOSS's advice to Mr Michael Wright, Deputy Secretary, NSW Independent Flood Inquiry on 19 September 2022 to inform the Reconstruction Authority legislation and emergency management governance;
- the social service sector's experience of and response to recent emergencies, as described above; and
- engagement and experience of the NSW Reconstruction Authority through our role leading the CSDC Project.

Through the CSDC Project, NCOSS has engaged with the NSW Reconstruction Authority in several ways:

- as our contract manager and funder, overseeing and supporting delivery of NCOSS's Disaster Risk Reduction Fund project;
- as key strategic partner in the establishment of the CSDC Local Projects, including participating in the process to select the CSDC Local Services and subsequent induction;
- as a key regional and local stakeholder to the CSDC Local Projects; and
- through policy engagement and consultation at the statewide level e.g. NSW State Disaster Mitigation Plan and review of the NSW Recovery Plan.

Our submission is also informed by comments and perspectives of a range of community and social service representatives gathered through our project work and sector engagement mechanisms.

1.7 NCOSS's previous advice on the development of the Reconstruction Authority legislation

NCOSS's advice to Mr Michael Wright of the NSW Independent Flood Inquiry in September 2022 was focused on ways to strengthen emergency management and resilience in NSW through embedding the role of the social service sector in the Reconstruction Authority legislation and emergency management governance more generally. We presented details of the way Victoria and Queensland have framed similar legislation inclusive of social service organisations and communities, and suggested how these models could be adapted in the NSW context to achieve a more holistic and integrated system of emergency management, across the disaster management cycle.

NCOSS included the following specific suggestions in the 2022 advice:

- Improving governance and resourcing at all levels of emergency management.
- Ensuring services are coordinated and delivered at a local level during emergency events.
- Reducing overlap and duplication within the emergency management systems, including by leveraging local, place-based community organisations.
- Recognising that people experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability are disproportionately impacted by disasters and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of those most vulnerable is prioritised.

- Providing the NSW Reconstruction Authorities with sufficient powers to oversee and coordinate government agencies and non-government organisations with responsibilities impacting preparation, response, reconstruction and recovery, housing, health and social support.
- Embedding the role of the social service sector in the Reconstruction Authority legislation and ensuring a relationship exists between the sector and the Authority.
- Requiring disaster management planning and decision-making take into consideration the views of local communities and networks of social service organisations, particularly in relation to needs, gaps and strengths relating to people on low incomes or other vulnerable.
- Assigning to the Reconstruction Authority functions regarding mapping existing social infrastructure, organisational capabilities and their disaster risks to inform risk reduction and pre-event planning inclusive of the sector and responsive to local population needs, as well as the mapping of impacts on social infrastructure after events.
- Coordinating and distributing resources to social service organisations to undertake risk mitigation, preparedness, planning and training tasks, reimbursing NGOs for their contribution to immediate mass care provision, and engaging nominated non-government organisations in high-risk areas to facilitate actions required throughout the disaster cycle and be a point of contact and liaison with the Reconstruction Authority.

1.8 Relevant learnings from the Community Sector Disaster Capability Project

NCOSS's advice is based on the principle that the social service sector should have a recognised and resourced role in all phases of the disaster management cycle to strengthen emergency planning, response and recovery and to increase community preparedness and resilience (particularly for those most vulnerable).

The CSDC Project has demonstrated the ways NGOs can contribute to disaster preparedness and resilience through specific programs such as the CSDC, by building sector capabilities and embedding risk reduction strategies within core service delivery and organisational practices. For example, NGOs can foster disaster preparedness among clients and communities by delivering 'preparedness support' sessions, using Person-Centred Emergency Planning tools and leveraging their human services skillset (including strengths-based, trauma informed practice). Second, CSDC Project has demonstrated how place-based services can use their local knowledge, networks and relationships of trust to engage clients, communities and peers, sharing skills and knowledge and building better communication and collaboration across service and organisational silos. Third, the CSDC Project has demonstrated that NGOs' deep knowledge of community and understanding of vulnerability is sought and valued by emergency management experts and agencies, to inform their plans and strategies.

The CSDC Project provides evidence of the constructive role that social services can play in strengthening resilience and preparedness and creating a more integrated, holistic and effective system of emergency management.

2. Comments on the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022

2.1 Reconstruction Authority Act does not provide a clear framework for the NGO sector's role

Our key contention is that the *NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022* does not provide a clear legislative framework for community and civil society's involvement in disaster preparedness, planning, mitigation and recovery.

The Reconstruction Authority Act does not acknowledge the role of the social service sector across all phases of the disaster cycle, nor does it specify how the Reconstruction Authority is responsible for strengthening and embedding this role. Despite the evidence of recent disasters and their aftermath, the sector is largely omitted in the legislation.

Functional gaps include:

- Any requirement for the mapping of and engagement with non-government service organisations as part of response and recovery planning or strengthening preparedness and resilience efforts. This is despite the sector's role in delivering essential social services on behalf of government, supporting response and recovery through disasters over many years, and increasing involvement in disaster preparedness and resilience.
- How the impacts of a disaster event on social infrastructure and essential social services delivered by NGOs are to be identified and addressed, and organisations supported.
- How social service organisations are to be commissioned to deliver disaster-related services on behalf of government (e.g. housing and social support, preparedness, resilience building) or contribute to the preparedness and planning functions of the Reconstruction Authority and other Emergency Management agencies.

The NSW Recovery Plan foregrounds community-centred recovery and resilience, yet there is little in the Reconstruction Authority Act to support this approach, such as requirements to involve the social service organisations and the communities they support in planning and program design.

2.2 Current approach to social service engagement is highly variable and locally determined

The Community Sector Disaster Capability Project's experience across four locations and seven LGAs reveals that engagement and collaboration by Emergency Management agencies and committees with local social services and community organisations is highly variable and locally determined. It may include:

- Co-design, collaboration and co-delivery opportunities - for selected NGO stakeholders
- Specific requests for advice/input from selected NGO stakeholders
- Inclusion of selected NGO CEO representatives on Emergency Management committees or sub-committees
- Engagement with selected services via Community Resilience Networks or Council contacts
- Urgent, post-event engagement to identify local organisations who can assist in recovery.
- Information provision and responding to specific requests from NGOs or community.

Where engagement does occur, the tone can be one of explanation and instruction rather than listening, partnership and collaboration. Furthermore, engagement opportunities can appear

tokenistic, driven by a ‘checkbox’ requirement rather than a genuine aim to broaden understanding and inform plans and practice. Feedback loops may be missing.

Recent instances of engagement and collaboration by the NSW Reconstruction Authority, as reported through the Reconstruction Authority Advisory Board - Chair’s Report, are welcomed and signal a positive trajectory under the current Government and Reconstruction Authority leadership. Significant efforts to engage communities and NGOs in the development of the Hawkesbury Nepean Valley Disaster Adaptation Plan being a case in point.

Further opportunities to strengthen engagement by co-designing and delivering engagement with local social services and vulnerable population groups, and commissioning NGOs to lead preparedness and resilience programs on behalf of government, could be considered. The CSDC Project has shown that established local organisations can leverage existing networks and trusted relationships to facilitate diverse engagement, including from so called “hard to reach” groups.

The considerable variation in the way the Reconstruction Authority and other Emergency Management agencies engage with the social service sector and community organisations reflects the absence of a legislative framework which clearly articulates and values the sector’s role and how government agencies are required to engage with social service organisations in relation to disaster preparedness, mitigation and recovery. NCOSS envisages a legislative framework which requires engagement of social service organisations and community representatives in relation to disaster planning, preparedness, recovery and mitigation. Such a legislative framework would bring important local and community perspectives and knowledge to these efforts, and strengthen approaches through a more holistic approach and inclusion of community and sector perspectives.

2.3 Intersection of social disadvantage and disaster vulnerability are not addressed

People on low incomes and those experiencing other forms of social disadvantage are typically more vulnerable to the impacts of disasters, often with fewer resources to adequately prepare or recover. The Reconstruction Authority Act fails to address the intersection of social disadvantage and disaster vulnerability and ascribe functions to explore and mitigate the compounding impacts social vulnerabilities. Examples include: conducting an analysis of social vulnerability indicators and testing what this means for planning and risk reduction with social service organisations and community stakeholders; sharing data and risk and impact assessments with social services to facilitate targeted and effective local efforts.

2.4 First Nations emergency management issues are not addressed

The Act also lacks any specific consideration of disaster preparedness, resilience and recovery in relation to First Nations people and organisations, including Local Aboriginal Land Councils. NCOSS proposes engagement with Aboriginal communities and non-government organisations is undertaken to consider how emergency management legislation and related plans could better reflect the priorities and issues of concern to First Nations people and support culturally appropriate and inclusive practice across all phases of disaster management.

2.5 Inclusive disaster management governance is not supported by the Act

The Reconstruction Authority Act is silent on the governance and engagement structures to be established to support its objectives, with the exception of the Reconstruction Authority Advisory Board. The Reconstruction Authority is required to leverage the existing structure of emergency management committees and related committee structures to support functions in relation to mitigation, preparation, prevention and recovery without powers to shape the composition of relevant committees. In practice, this means those outside government and Emergency Management are excluded from relevant committees whose membership is specified in the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. In effect, social service representation on Emergency Management structures is only allowed in a non-voting capacity, agreed at the committee level.

The lack of a governance and engagement framework inclusive of the social services sector and community representatives (as well as other civil society stakeholders) is a significant deficit in the Act. It reduces the capacity of the Reconstruction Authority to build a governance structure that is fit for purpose in guiding and facilitating top-quality preparedness, prevention, mitigation and recovery planning.

2.6 Advisory Board membership

The function of the Advisory Board include (Section 25 (b): “to make recommendations to the chief executive officer about - (i) priorities for community infrastructure, other property and community services needed for the protection, rebuilding and recovery of affected communities”.

It is noted that the current make-up of the Advisory Board, while bringing diverse expertise and experience to the role, does not include anyone with experience in the social services sector. NCOSS recommends that this gap in the knowledge and expertise of the current board is addressed at the earliest opportunity.

2.7 Lack of Reconstruction Authority role in design and commissioning, particularly relating to social service organisations

Many of the functions ascribed to the Reconstruction Authority relating to the primary objectives of the Act, particularly under Section 4(b), are of a general nature. That is, involve assisting, facilitating, advising, supporting, and coordinating, etc. The functions of the Reconstruction Authority as an organisation providing strategic leadership and a framework for action across government agencies in relation to its objectives could be more clearly expressed. Many clauses lack specificity about the actions to be undertaken and the structures, systems and programs to be put in place to strengthen disaster resilience, preparedness, prevention and mitigation.

The specific functions of the Reconstruction Authority should be revisited to ensure the legislation captures and describes these functions clearly, as required. Consideration should be given to including functions relating to social service organisations. For example, by articulating a role for the Reconstruction Authority in commissioning or undertaking the mapping of social infrastructure to identify capacities and assets before disaster events and identifying impacts and required actions after disaster events. Such mapping can also support pre-event planning and preparedness activities. Another specific function could relate to the Reconstruction Authority’s role in commissioning and coordinating the social service and community organisations in disaster preparedness, resilience and recovery services, programs and activities, in particular the commissioning of place-based NGOs to

lead sector capacity building, preparedness and resilience work in high-risk areas. This type of NGO-delivered service could play an important role in bringing a detailed and localised understanding of vulnerability to emergency management personnel, plans and strategies.

2.8 A more integrated approach is required

A cornerstone of disaster management is an operational split between the different phases of disaster management; that is, response, recovery, prevention and mitigation, planning and preparedness.

From a community and place-based perspective, these divisions serve little purpose except to create operational silos, confusion and duplication (e.g. in risk and vulnerability analysis, engagement, planning and effort). People understand and directly experience response, recovery, preparedness and mitigation as overlapping and intersecting activities. Disasters are no longer an occasional event interspersed by years of recovery and return to 'normal', and the phases of the disaster management cycle are no longer the exclusive domain of emergency management agencies and specialists. Increasing numbers of people and organisations are activated and engaged across the disaster management cycle.

As this engagement builds, an emergency management system structured around operational divides will become increasingly anachronistic. A more integrated and holistic approach is needed to respond to the current context and support community-centred, place-based approaches across all phases of the emergency management cycle. Accordingly, legislative and policy frameworks are needed which recognise and integrate the common functions which sit across the different phases of disaster management, enabling a more integrated, holistic and effective system of disaster management and resilience to flourish.

3. Conclusion

NCOSS urges the Joint Committee to consider amendments to the *NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022* that would support and enable more holistic, community-led approaches to disaster preparedness, mitigation, prevention and recovery. Moving away from operational and functional divides towards integrated strategies which build resilience, preparedness and recovery will be more efficient and more effective than siloed approaches with an exclusive focus on government and emergency agency actors. Place-based, social services organisations which bring established relationships, deep local knowledge and expertise in working with communities and vulnerable groups have an integral role to play in creating better prepared and more resilient communities, organisations and systems. The legislative framework for emergency management and reconstruction needs to support and enable this role.

With the frequency, severity and scale of disasters forecast to increase in the coming years due to the effects of climate change, there needs to be a shift in the way disaster management is understood and implemented. Amendments to the *NSW Reconstruction Act 2022* provide an opportunity to move in the right direction.

4. Appendix

Functions of Authority

10 Functions

(1) The Authority's functions are as follows—

- (a) disaster prevention and preparedness, including—
 - (i) identifying, assessing and managing the risks from disasters, and
 - (ii) leading disaster resilience, adaptation and mitigation activities, and
 - (iii) building community capacity and resilience to disasters, and
 - (iv) developing and implementing methodologies for disaster resilience, adaptation and mitigation activities,
- (b) reconstruction and recovery following disasters and other emergencies, including—
 - (i) assisting the Minister administering the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* and the State Emergency Recovery Controller to exercise the Minister's and Controller's functions in relation to recovery under that Act, and
 - (ii) facilitating, coordinating and directing the recovery, planning and rebuilding of affected communities, including repairing and rebuilding land and infrastructure and other development, and
 - (iii) balancing constraints to enable a focused, timely and expedited recovery of affected communities,
- (c) information provision and exchange and community engagement, including—
 - (i) supporting collaboration and coordination between government agencies, local councils, service providers and communities to improve disaster prevention, preparedness, recovery, reconstruction and adaptation, and
 - (ii) increasing the flow of information and enabling community participation to support the development of strategies for disaster prevention, preparedness, recovery, reconstruction and adaptation,
- (d) to coordinate the development and implementation of whole-of-government policies for—
 - (i) managing the risk of disasters in the State, and
 - (ii) ensuring communities can recover, reconstruct and adapt effectively and efficiently following disasters, and
 - (iii) improving the preparedness and resilience of communities for potential disasters,
- (e) to prepare and implement a State disaster mitigation plan for disasters in the State,
- (f) to provide advice and support to local councils to help maximise the effectiveness of councils' disaster preparedness and reconstruction programs,
- (g) to provide advice and assistance to local councils and relevant strategic planning authorities under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* to ensure strategic plans prepared under that Act, Division 3.1 and the State disaster mitigation plan align,
- (h) to lead the management and coordination of housing and infrastructure renewal and recovery within affected communities,
- (i) to work closely with affected communities to ensure the needs of each community are recognised in the recovery and reconstruction of the community, and to improve the disaster preparedness and resilience of communities,
- (j) to lead public education on disaster risks and certain disaster preparations,
- (k) to carry out research, and provide advice, proposals, recommendations and reports to the Minister, about—
 - (i) disaster prevention and preparedness, and
 - (ii) recovery and reconstruction following disasters,

- (l) to enter into joint ventures, project delivery agreements and other arrangements with landowners, developers, State and Commonwealth government agencies and local councils in relation to disaster prevention, recovery and reconstruction, (m) to implement funding schemes to provide financial support in relation to disaster prevention, recovery and reconstruction,
- (n) to carry out rezoning and land use planning, including exercising the functions of local councils for the purpose of land use planning in relation to disasters, (o) to carry out flood modelling and the determination of flood planning levels, particularly in relation to high risk catchments,
- (p) to assist with the development of flood plans,
- (q) to monitor the cumulative impact of disasters on the State, including by collecting and storing data about the impact, or likely impact, of disasters across the State,
- (r) to exercise other functions conferred or imposed on the Authority by or under this Act or another Act,
- (s) to do anything supplementary, incidental or consequential on the exercise of the Authority's functions under paragraphs (a)–(r).

Roles of Place-based NGOs in Disaster Management

This diagram illustrates some of the roles place-based social service non-government organisations (NGOs) may play in the disaster management cycle.

Understanding their role can help NGOs plan, prepare and contribute – and is an important aspect of disaster risk reduction.

Emergency services and Government agencies responsible for disaster management can use this information to better understand the role that NGOs can and do play in disasters. This can inform better engagement, collaboration and communication between NGOs and Government.

The emergency management cycle is typically divided into 4 stages: Preparedness & Planning, Response, Recovery and Prevention & Mitigation.

- Each stage of the cycle is related to the others.
- The stages can occur concurrently, e.g. responding to a disaster while working on recovery from another.
- NGOs do not have to be involved in all, or any, of the stages. NGO disaster management activities are currently based on the NGO's capacity and mission, funding and resources, type of services provided and impact of the disaster on service delivery.

Preparedness & Planning



Katungul ACRH&CS/Eden Community Access Centre, May 2024

- Awareness raising, particularly targeting local communities vulnerable to the impacts of disasters
- Bringing vulnerability 'lens' to planning and preparedness - deep local knowledge and networks
- Preparedness support - Individual, family and small group disaster preparedness activities with specific cohorts (e.g. people with a disability; older people, people in social housing) aimed at:
 - o Building individual and community resilience and connections to support communities to withstand and recover more quickly from disasters and
 - o Enabling access to resources and networks, which can help people prepare, respond and recover
- Building community connectedness and social cohesion
- Organisational preparedness/capability mapping; business continuity planning
- Whole-of-community preparedness planning and engagement
- Contributing to formal local disaster planning.

Response



- Emotional and cultural support and reassurance
- Providing material and financial relief
- Keeping people informed, connected and safe
- A trusted source for communicating emergency messages to communities
- Providing safe spaces, including culturally safe spaces
- Supporting evacuation, coordinating community efforts
- Access to IT/internet for residents
- Referral to disaster assistance
- Advocating for impacted communities' needs
- Using existing service relationships to support vulnerable community members
- Maintaining service delivery, if possible, to ensure access to essential services.

Recovery



Elise Derwin/Resilient Lismore, March 2024

- Trusted, local, trauma-informed support
- Client advocacy, referral and case coordination, including delivering government funded programs such as NSW Recovery Support Services
- Community activities for connection and healing
- Centering the voice of community in the design and planning of recovery initiatives
- Identifying issues created or exacerbated by disaster and advocating their resolution
- Delivering new services or boosting service capacity to meet increased demand created by disaster
- Supporting and 'scaffolding' community groups and grassroots organisations engaged in recovery
- Hosting visiting recovery services; providing facilities for recovery hubs
- Advocating for alignment of disaster and ongoing social support service delivery
- Building trusted relationships as an intermediary between 'outsiders' (e.g. Emergency Management agencies, larger charities, donors) and local communities.

Prevention & Mitigation



Peppercorn Services, March 2024

Note: These social service NGO roles in Mitigation and Prevention currently occur in an ad hoc way, often relying on government and emergency management agencies seeking input.

Prevention

- Providing input into new housing developments and prevention measures such as roads and levees that will protect communities.

Mitigation

- Providing contextualised guidance to government and emergency services on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, the impacts of disaster on these groups and actions that can be taken by the NGO sector, government and other stakeholders to reduce the impact of disasters on these groups.
- Building individual and community resilience and connections to support communities to withstand and recover more quickly from disasters.
- Building community and neighbourhood connections and access to resources and networks, which can help people prepare, respond and recover.
- Advocating and engaging with local emergency management sub-committees or community engagement forums to improve coordination and align plans to community needs and strengths.

Acknowledgement

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