



**Australian Red Cross**  
THE POWER OF HUMANITY

Australian Red Cross  
Public Submission

to the

Senate Standing Committee on  
Environment and Communications  
Inquiry into

Recent trends in and preparedness for  
extreme weather events

January 2013

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## Executive summary

### Context

Red Cross acknowledges<sup>1</sup> that the earth's climate is changing, resulting in severe weather events including extreme fire weather days, intense storms, heatwaves, cyclonic activity, and droughts<sup>2</sup>.

Extreme weather emergencies have serious impacts on people's health and wellbeing, as well as their ability to maintain a livelihood. They can significantly disrupt communities, economies, and the environment.

Red Cross has been providing emergency services across Australia for close to a century, and has been recognised as being the first disaster response organisation in Australia, providing relief and recovery support during the 1918 influenza pandemic<sup>3</sup>. The aim of the Emergency Services program is to assist individuals, households, and communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies across Australia. This is achieved through mobilising up to 7,700 volunteers, supported by a staff of 70 drawing upon our experience of previous emergencies both nationally and internationally, a budget of \$7million annually, and through strategic partnerships, such as with the Australian Psychological Society and Save the Children.

Red Cross Emergency Services has four strategic outcomes relating to;

1. emergency preparedness
2. emergency response
3. emergency recovery
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

This submission covers a range of areas of interest to Red Cross, including:

- a new approach to household preparedness
- a sustainable volunteer workforce
- long term recovery
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- vulnerable members of the Australian community
- the impact of overseas extreme weather events
- Australia's emergency management governance

Recommendations from this submission include:

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Red Cross Board *Climate Change Policy*

<sup>2</sup> Whittaker, J (2011) *Climate change impacts factsheet: Emergency Management* National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Climate Commission (2012) *Off the Charts Extreme Australian Summer Heat*

<sup>3</sup> Smith, E (2006) National Disaster Preparedness before and after 9/11 *Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care (JEPHC)*, Vol.4, Issue 2, 2006

### **Household preparedness**

- That all disaster awareness preparedness programs factor in the psycho-social impacts as a key component.
- That ongoing program development and coordination funding should be provided to agencies to enable planning and partnership development.
- That implementation funding take a longer term view, recognising that it takes 2 to 5 years to achieve sustainable change at a community level.
- That a cost benefit model of community education programs be developed and used as an important component of funding decision making.
- That further exploration of the role of social capital in disaster resilience occurs, and the development of practical indicators be undertaken to assist with community level preparedness programs.

### **Sustainable workforce**

- That the Council of Australian Governments/MCPEM agree to a funding model that reflects the lifecycle of emergency management, that includes recurrent 3 to 5 year funding for emergency relief and recovery agencies to maintain and build capacity to meet future challenges.
- That NDRRA arrangements are reviewed to create a consistent application across the country, and encourage transparency in plans and decision making for the trigger of cost recovery measures.

### **Long term recovery**

- That government's across Australia adopt consistent needs assessment processes to inform recovery planning.
- That all Australian government's fund recovery on a long term basis (minimum of 2 years, with consideration of extension).
- That the development of a permanent, appropriately skilled recovery workforce at a national, state/territory and local level be prioritised.
- That existing recovery capacity within governments and non government agencies is further developed, such that an understanding is reached that recovery is everyone's business.
- That further research and modelling is undertaken of recovery models and programs including a cost benefit framework.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

- That further research into the application of traditional knowledge to emergency management is required.
- That a sustainable funding model is developed to support capacity building programs and activities in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### **Vulnerable members of the Australian community**

- That vulnerable members of the Australian community are targeted for support to build disaster resilience, through supporting existing human service providers.
- That consideration be given to examining ways of reducing the financial burden of preparedness activities for members of the community facing financial challenges. This includes examining affordable insurance.

**Impact of overseas extreme weather events**

- That there be greater recognition of the need for preparedness to respond to more severe and more frequent extreme weather emergencies in Asia and the Pacific region.
- That continued support for climate change adaptation programs exist at the community level in Asia and the Pacific.

**Australia's emergency management governance**

- That a stronger focus is given to the role of not for profits and corporates as contributors to policy and practice development.
- That the significant role of not for profits at national and state/territory level should be reflected through membership of the ANZEMC and its sub committees.
- That, through its unique and internationally recognised mandate as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, Red Cross should be appointed as a key member of the ANZEMC.

## Introduction

Red Cross welcomes the Senate Standing Committees' initiative and considers this Inquiry an important contribution to the ongoing dialogue associated with the impact of extreme weather on the resilience of Australians to the potential affects of disaster. This summer's events of fire in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales; floods and storms in Queensland and New South Wales; and extreme heat in South Australia serve as a reminder of the importance of disaster preparedness.

Extreme weather events cause significant disruption to lives across Australia and the region in which we live. Over the past decade we have seen, within Oceania, disasters cause 1,800 deaths and damage estimated to cost USD 50 billion dollars. Within Australia specifically, these impacts include over 700 people killed and 460,000 people affected by disasters in the past decade<sup>4</sup>.

Since 2006, Red Cross has supported over 350,000 people in 650 different emergencies, from single house fires through to large scale national level emergencies such as the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009 and the Queensland floods of 2011, utilising approximately 11,000 volunteers and staff.

What these figures do not tell are the stories of loss and disruption to communities. From the loss of businesses, livelihoods and landmarks to changed landscapes, these impacts are felt well and truly past the disappearance of television cameras and into the long term.

Preparation for extreme weather in Australia is managed within a framework that covers a comprehensive approach to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Emergency management arrangements at all levels of government deal with all types of hazards in their scope, encompassing natural hazards, technological failures and events, and human-caused emergencies.

Red Cross plays a major role in supporting individuals and communities through these arrangements. Recognised internationally as auxiliary to public authorities in the humanitarian field, Red Cross has a significant role in supporting governments to respond to humanitarian crises.

Red Cross acknowledges<sup>5</sup> that the earth's climate is changing; resulting in severe weather events, including extreme fire weather days, intense storms, heatwaves, cyclonic activity, and droughts<sup>6</sup>. Rising sea levels will also impact upon livelihoods, particularly coastal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the top end of Australia. Within our region, changing climate and sea level rises will also have significant impacts on Pacific Island nations.

Red Cross welcomes attempts to address the impacts of extreme weather through, amongst others:

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<sup>4</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2012) *World Disasters Report 2012*

<sup>5</sup> Australian Red Cross Board *Climate Change Policy*.

<sup>6</sup> Whittaker, J (2011) *Climate change impacts factsheet: Emergency Management* National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Climate Commission (2012) *Off the Charts Extreme Australian Summer Heat*

- The work undertaken by the:
  - Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre
  - National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility
  - Climate Commission
- Agreement of all levels of government through the Council of Australian Government's *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (NSDR).

Red Cross sees this strategy as the first truly national attempt to focus upon disaster management in a holistic sense, guiding how we support Australians to become more resilient to the increasing challenges of the 21st century. Red Cross has a strong interest in disaster resilience, as the world's largest humanitarian organisation, and notes that the NSDR is closely aligned with the primary goal of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to prevent and reduce human suffering.

## Scope of submission

Red Cross does not seek to address all aspects of the Inquiry terms of reference. The submission will focus on issues related to our work supporting Australian individuals, households and communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, consistent with our expertise and formal roles in Australia's emergency management arrangements. Specifically the submission relates to the following terms of reference:

*(c) an assessment of the preparedness of key sectors for extreme weather events, including major infrastructure (electricity, water, transport, telecommunications), health, construction and property, and agriculture and forestry;*

*(d) an assessment of the preparedness and the adequacy of resources in the emergency services sector to prevent and respond to extreme weather events;*

*(e) the current roles and effectiveness of the division of responsibilities between different levels of government (federal, state and local) to manage extreme weather events.*

## The challenge of extreme weather

The following section outlines Red Cross' understanding of the challenges facing Australia in the face of increasing extreme weather events.

### Context

Red Cross welcomes the Senate Standing Committees Inquiry's terms of reference in reflecting the impacts of 'extreme weather', rather than 'natural disasters'. Traditionally we have seen delineation in emergency management planning between 'natural' and 'man made' hazards. Increasingly this distinction is becoming less relevant. From Red Cross' perspective, this is because of the increasing complexities resulting from urban planning and infrastructure impacts on communities as a result of weather events, as well as a better developed understanding of the impacts of emergencies on people. While there are some differences between the psychosocial impacts of human caused and natural events, the similarities are significant.

Globally we are seeing emergency events occur more frequently and with more severity. It is widely acknowledged that this trend is set to continue with the number of people affected by emergencies to be substantially greater than in the past<sup>7</sup>.

The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility's Emergency Management Cluster indicates that climate change is likely to see a range of impacts; in particular there will be a significant increase in the frequency of very high/extreme fire danger days. Ongoing coastal development and rise in population along the Australian coastline will result in many people being at risk from the increased frequency in severe storms and coastal flooding due to sea level rise. It is also generally accepted that there will be more frequent and intense cyclone events in the north, bushfire events in the south, storms on the eastern seaboard, intense flash flooding will be interposed with longer dry periods, and that people will need to be aware of the changing nature and impacts of emergencies<sup>8</sup>.

Extreme weather emergencies have serious impacts on people's health and wellbeing, as well as their ability to maintain a livelihood, and can significantly disrupt communities, economies, and the environment. The sudden and disruptive nature of many emergencies means that every person involved may be vulnerable at some point during that emergency; be it in the early relief (survival) stages when they are without shelter, food and/or clothing, or during long term (recovery) as they recover from financial, health and social impacts<sup>9</sup>.

In the modern era, a range of high profile events has changed the public profile of emergency management. Governments and agencies such as Red Cross now have more robust structures in place to deal with a range of threats, and have significantly increased their resourcing in this area. The effects of drought placed stress on rural communities, and increased food prices within urban communities. Periods of extreme heat (South Australia and Victoria 2009) severely affected the health of older and unwell Australians. Resource security has become more tenuous with more frequent, widespread and longer outages of utilities such as electricity and gas.

As we continue to experience a range of emergencies we know that larger scale events will provoke greater community goodwill, and systems to harness that goodwill nationally and internationally will need to be enhanced, particularly in the case of international goodwill where International Disaster Response Law should be fully utilised. Changing economic circumstances will also impact on the resilience of individuals and households to withstand the impact of emergencies, potentially leaving many people without the financial resources to manage their own recovery from a major emergency, as well as fiscally constraining governments.

The 24 hour news cycle, coupled with new sources of information through various social media channels, often means that disasters are given a greater profile than they have been in the past, but in some cases for a shorter period of time. With this comes a greater expectation on all participants; governments, agencies, private sector, and communities themselves to respond to emerging needs. It also brings greater, almost real time scrutiny. This situation brings new players into the scenario, often well intentioned, but with little

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<sup>7</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) *Climate Change 2007: Summary for Policy Makers*

<sup>8</sup> Whittaker, J (2011) *Climate change impacts factsheet: Emergency Management* National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Climate Commission (2012) *Off the Charts Extreme Australian Summer Heat*

<sup>9</sup> Handmer, J., 2003, 'We are all vulnerable', in *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, Vol. 18 No 3. August, p56



understanding of the existing arrangements, leading to potentially poorly coordinated or duplicated services.

There is often a contradiction in messaging, particularly from governments who on one hand are clear about their inability to assist everyone while on the other hand increasingly pushing messages about providing whole of community rebuilding and recovery support. For example messages that communities should not expect a fire truck in a bushfire scenario, or that personal hardship grant assistance will be mean's tested, are in contradiction to messages such as "we will provide all the support you need and will rebuild together". This messaging need to be carefully managed as it leads to confusion in communities, and can falsely raise expectations about government support.

The tragic events of the last few years provide clear understanding that community expectation is only able to be met by a wide range of resources and expertise, drawn from a combination of humanitarian organisations, communities themselves, the private sector, research institutions as well as local, state and federal governments working together.

Given our experience in these areas the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's international and domestic efforts are increasingly focusing on the humanitarian impacts of climate change. The Movement plays a vital role in disaster relief worldwide, and is regularly challenged by the dramatic increase in extreme weather related disasters. In Australia this has been particularly evident in the recent bushfires, cyclone, droughts and floods felt nationally.

### **Impacts of emergencies**

Traditionally, the focus of emergency management activities in Australia has been on preservation of life, hazard management and mitigation and the replacement of physical infrastructure impacted by emergencies, including roads, buildings and equipment.

This approach has ignored, or played down, the complexity inherent in the consequences of loss and the severe disruption that emergency events have on individual life and community networks.

While there is an increasing understanding of the impacts of cumulative events on communities, there is still a tendency to treat these as separate events from an emergency management perspective. This includes multiple extreme weather events, such as drought, heatwave, flood or cyclone coupled with the effects of the global economic crisis or local economic downturns, and other demographic shifts.

Red Cross recognises that the impacts of disaster extend beyond survival from the hazard impact, to being able to cope with the disruption that an emergency can cause to an individual's life and community functioning taking account of existing challenges, vulnerabilities and circumstances.

Red Cross describes these impacts of disaster as psycho-social impacts because they have an impact on people's psychological wellbeing, as well as their social wellbeing. The psychological dimension being the internal, emotional and thought processes of a person – his or her feelings and reactions; and the social dimension being relationships, family and community networks, social values and cultural practices<sup>10</sup>.

Psycho-social impacts might include disruption caused by loss of:

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<sup>10</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, (2007), *Psycho-social Interventions: A handbook* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)

- significant loved ones
- a sense of security
- hope and initiative
- faith and trust in others
- dignity
- social networks and institutions
- social routines
- access to services
- infrastructure
- property (including homes and businesses), material goods, pets
- prospects of a livelihood; and
- place and landscapes<sup>11</sup>.

These losses and their attendant disruption manifest in many different ways, including an increase in:

- economic pressures
- the incidence of physical, mental health and wellbeing issues
- loss of productivity
- fragmenting of communities.

These factors can in turn impact on a person's identity, ability to do things (physical, emotional, economic), sense of purpose, independence, control over one's life and future and place in their community.

Understanding these impacts shapes our responses. For example, if we understand the psycho-social impacts of losing a home in an extreme weather event, we have a greater understanding of the complexity of the decision making processes regarding sense of community, identity, history and self, as well as the severe impacts trauma has on our abilities to absorb, interpret and remember information and make decisions. Then if we add the complexities of the post emergency regulatory environment, including insurance, changes to building codes and town planning, we begin to see why the seemingly simple structural process of rebuilding a house is so difficult. To this end, all impacts of emergencies are psycho-social in nature to some extent.

The loss of material items, pets and landscapes, is often underestimated and can be seen as purely sentimental, when in fact they help people connect to their past and define who they are<sup>12</sup>. Included in this are landscapes and places, which also provide individuals with a sense of identity and anchor points. Their loss can disorient people and remove familiar reference points that inform who we are and cannot easily be replaced<sup>13</sup>.

When people are displaced from their homes, they lose their community networks, their "informal insurance"<sup>14</sup>. In addition, it forces people to deal with new communities, and build new networks and links.

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Psychology Society and Australian Red Cross (2010) *Psychological First Aid: an Australian Manual*

<sup>12</sup> Read, P., (1996), *Returning to Nothing*. Melbourne: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge

<sup>13</sup> Little, G.(1999), *The Public Emotions: From Mourning to Hope*. Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney

<sup>14</sup> Aldrich, D.P., (2010), 'Fixing Recovery: Social Capital in Post-Crisis Resilience' in *Journal of Homeland Security*, retrieved 18 Oct 2011 from [http://works.bepress.com/daniel\\_aldrich/7](http://works.bepress.com/daniel_aldrich/7) on 29 Oct 2011

While many people will not be affected by the impacts, all have the potential to manifest in health and wellbeing issues, including poor health status, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, increased risk taking, and poor productivity in the workplace amongst other things.

## Resilience and Social Capacity

The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* asserts that disaster resilient communities have a number of common characteristics, the fourth of these being social capacity. It asserts that 'resilient communities ...share the importance of social support systems, such as neighbourhoods, family and kinship networks, social cohesion, mutual interest groups, and mutual self-help groups'<sup>15</sup>.

Red Cross' recovery work and much research undertaken confirms that social capacity, often termed social capital, is a key attribute of disaster resilient communities. The pre-existence of social networks, established formal and informal organisations and strong, self-determined, democratic community leadership have shown, in the immediate, medium and long term following an emergency, to save lives, allow for sharing of vital information and resources, provide a basis for the planning and execution of tasks, provide a basis on which ongoing formal information delivery can be managed and ensure appropriate self-advocacy on the basis of need<sup>16</sup>.

Recovery from the impacts of emergencies can be a long, complex and dynamic process, and no two people will experience the same disaster in the same way. Experience of the Black Saturday Fires (2009) in Victoria, where recovery programs are still running after four years, demonstrates potentially lifelong impacts for some people affected by extreme weather. Evidence and experience suggests that individuals who are grounded in having well functioning and resourced personal and community networks and a good coping<sup>17</sup> ability are likely to recover well, and programs need to identify where these strengths exist, support them, and help build capacity where they do not exist.

In his 2010 paper for the Department of Homeland Security in the United States, Prof. Daniel Aldrich outlined three ways which emergency affected people with strong social capital were supported following an emergency. The first was that they were able to access 'informal insurance' from their networks, including access to finance, childcare, transport, accommodation and goods that they needed. The second was that communities with strong social capital were able to organise themselves, prioritise their needs and articulate how they wanted their recovery to take place. The third way was through positive social behaviour; that is, where there was strong social capital, community members were less likely to engage in anti social behaviour (such as looting), and were more likely to stay in communities or move back quickly. This all contributed to swifter, stronger recovery from emergency events. Aldrich's findings reflect the significant experience of Red Cross in post emergency communities.

The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* notes that "Disaster resilience is a long term outcome, which will require long term commitment. Achieving disaster resilience will require

<sup>15</sup> Council of Australian Governments, (2011), *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*

<sup>16</sup> Aldrich, D.P., (2010), 'Fixing Recovery: Social Capital in Post-Crisis Resilience' in *Journal of Homeland Security*, retrieved 18 Oct 2011 from [http://works.bepress.com/daniel\\_aldrich/7](http://works.bepress.com/daniel_aldrich/7) on 29 Oct 2011

Dynes, R.R., (2006), 'Social Capital: Dealing With Community Emergencies', *Homeland Security Affairs*, 2 (2).

Yuko Nakagawa and Rajib Shaw (2004) *Social Capital: A Missing Link to Disaster Recovery* International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters March 2004, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 5-34

<sup>17</sup> Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health & International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2008), *Public Health Guide in Emergencies*, 2nd ed, Geneva, Switzerland.

sustained behavioural change, the results of which should be seen across a number of years and political cycles". The increasing number of extreme weather events, their increasing impact on urban, peri-urban, rural and remote communities (and our understanding of their impact), increasing exposure of efforts will require a shift in the way that we help people prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

The following sections will detail Red Cross' contribution to improving resilience in the face of increasing extreme weather, and suggestions for the improvements in the emergency management sector more broadly.

## Red Cross' role in emergency management

Red Cross has been providing emergency services across Australia for close to a century, and has been recognised as being the first disaster response organisation in Australia, providing relief and recovery support during the 1918 influenza pandemic<sup>18</sup>.

Red Cross, in our own right, and as auxiliary to public authorities in the humanitarian field, already contributes to a wide spectrum of emergency management planning and activity, investing significant organisational internal funds to support our activities. This contribution to promoting disaster resilience has expanded over recent years from basic relief activities, to significant contributions to assist householders to prepare for the true impacts of disasters, supporting people in the response period, and assisting individuals and communities to recover in the long term.

In response to the increasing incidence of disasters and increased community expectations, in 2007, the national Australian Red Cross board endorsed a revised framework that created a National Emergency Services program with dedicated infrastructure and operating resources in each state and territory. Emergency Services is one of eight priority areas for Red Cross in Australia, and represents two of the four pillars of the International Red Cross Movement.

The aim of the program is to assist individuals, households, and communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies across Australia. This is achieved through mobilising up to 7,700 volunteers, supported by a staff of 70 drawing upon our experience of previous emergencies both nationally and internationally, a budget of \$7million annually, and through strategic partnerships, such as with the Australian Psychology Society and Save the Children. Red Cross also draws upon substantial organisational resources to support the emergency services activities. This can have significant business continuity issues during major emergencies.

Red Cross Emergency Services has four strategic outcomes relating to;

1. emergency preparedness
2. emergency response
1. emergency recovery
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, E (2006) National Disaster Preparedness before and after 9/11 *Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care (JEPHC)*, Vol.4, Issue 2, 2006

### **Emergency Preparedness**

*That individuals, households, and those more vulnerable to the impacts of emergencies are significantly better prepared for, better connected to each other, and more resilient to, emergencies.*

Emergency REDiPlan, is an all hazards community education program that helps people prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. The focus of Emergency REDiPlan is based on lessons learnt from our recovery experience in addressing the loss and disruption to people's lives.

Using a community development approach, we seek to partner with communities, government, emergency management agencies and other organisations to adopt and promote Emergency REDiPlan to build resilience on a household and community level.

### **Emergency Response**

*That basic human needs are met in times of emergencies.*

Within the emergency response period, emergency relief is the provision of assistance during or immediately after an emergency to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs of those people affected.

Within state emergency management arrangements, we work with the whole-of-community, mobilising a range of resources, including well trained volunteers, to focus our efforts on meeting people's basic needs in the urgent relief period of emergencies.

Our activities in this area can be described in four broad areas, supporting people's immediate needs in relation to:

- health and wellbeing
- shelter
- information and
- materials.

Practically, this means; operating the National Registration and Inquiry System (NRIS), designed to reunite families separated by disaster; the provision of psycho-social support, based upon psychological first aid principles; and assisting with the management of evacuation centres, including management of these centres in Queensland. This work is guided by the Sphere Standards for Minimum Humanitarian Response (2010).

### **Emergency Recovery**

*That individuals and communities are assisted in their journey to recover after an emergency.*

Within state or territory and national emergency recovery arrangements, Red Cross works within its organisational competencies and 'ways of working'<sup>19</sup> to assist individuals and communities attain a good level of psycho-social wellbeing following an emergency.

Successful recovery relies upon understanding the context, recognising the complexity, using community led approaches, ensuring coordination of all activities, employing effective communication, and acknowledging and building capacity.

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<sup>19</sup> Australian Red Cross (2009) *Ways of Working*

Using psychological first aid principles,<sup>20</sup> Red Cross plans, in conjunction with local communities and governments, to reach out and connect people with existing services and information, validating their experience, and support community activities that build and rebuild social capital post disaster. A focus of our work is capacity building for individuals in the provision of quality advisory information, e.g. *After the Emergency* website and *Helping Children and Young People Cope with Crisis* guide, for community members and for agencies, *Communicating in Recovery*, and, the *Community Recovery Information Series*, designed to build capacity in communities to lead their own recovery.

Red Cross also has a key role in conducting major public appeals in the aftermath of disasters, for example in partnership with the Tasmanian Government (2006, 2013), the Queensland Government (2013), and the Victorian Government (2009).

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

*That the impact of disasters, emergencies and climate change is significantly reduced for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are amongst the most vulnerable in the country, and many are subject to extreme weather events. Through existing partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stakeholders (including community councils and elders), Red Cross seeks to draw on traditional knowledge to adapt our capabilities identified in the three outcome areas above to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. This is a relatively new and important focus of our work. This is also an opportunity to provide support to communities and raise awareness regarding the changing environment within which we are now living that brings with it harsher conditions and environments and an increased likelihood of more extensive extreme weather events. This is based on a two way partnership approach between Red Cross and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For example, in South Australia, Aboriginal communities within Port Augusta, Flinders Ranges and Port Lincoln have partnered with Red Cross to build capacity amongst Aboriginal community members in the area of preparedness. The partnership also extends to Red Cross to play a key facilitation role in linking the community with relevant and appropriate emergency management agencies to ensure they are well connected and have their emergency services needs acknowledged and understood by State Government.

### **Organisational capability**

Australian Red Cross plays a unique role in assisting those in need through its auxiliary relationship with government which is recognised in commitments made by the Australian Government at International Conferences of all States party to the Geneva conventions and in our Royal Charter. Red Cross is independent of government but is not an NGO (and cannot register as one under the United Nations system).

While upholding its fundamental principle of 'independence', the practical implication of the auxiliary role is that Red Cross is a reliable partner for national and local public authorities. It reflects a specific and distinctive partnership with government which brings with it expertise in providing humanitarian services, in International Humanitarian Law, in Emergency Services, and in International Disaster Response Law (IDRL). Red Cross also has links with 186 Red Cross Societies in other countries.

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<sup>20</sup> Australian Psychology Society and Australian Red Cross (2010) *Psychological First Aid: An Australian Manual*

Our work in emergency management is shaped by a number of processes;

- The International Federation Strategy 2020, which focuses upon building individual and community resilience and capacity, disaster response and recovery and utilising the best available research and evidence
- The National Principles for Recovery Management (2008)
- The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011)
- Red Cross Ways of Working; and
- a continual review process of our activities under our Program Quality and Development program.

Red Cross also has increasing experience in managing projects of national significance in emergency management (Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Emergencies on behalf of Department of Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs, and the National Registration and Inquiry System redevelopment on behalf of the Federal Attorney-General's Department). We possess robust project management skills, supported by a sound service quality framework. This skill set, as well as access to expertise across the International Federation lends itself to leading or co-leading significant emergency management projects.

As a result of these developments and experience, Red Cross Emergency Services is now able to bring an unparalleled depth of capability and surge capacity to bear on emergency events of any scale and for any jurisdiction in the country. Development and management of that capability is framed in our Emergency Services Strategy 2010-2015. The Strategy has been developed based on the organisation's commitment to emergency management, as well as direct experience in dealing with the most vulnerable in many emergencies over many decades, from local incidents through to events requiring a national response such as Cyclone Larry in 2006, the Queensland Floods in 2011, and the Black Saturday Bushfires in 2009.

## Household preparedness: A new approach

This section addresses the terms of reference (d) and covers:

- Red Cross' view on current household and community preparedness initiatives
- Introducing the concept of psycho-social preparedness
- Outlining Red Cross' Emergency Rediplan program

*"All the bits and pieces that make me are gone."*<sup>21</sup>

- Margaret River resident following a bushfire that destroyed his home.

Australian emergency services agencies, such as the fire agencies education programs and the SES' Flood Safe programs, have a strong history of providing information to residents to prepare to *survive* hazards. This approach reflects on the prime mission of these agencies, generally being the protection of life and property.

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<sup>21</sup> 'Residents flee to beach as bushfire destroys home', (2011), *The Age*, retrieved 24 Nov 2011 from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/residents-flee-to-beach-as-bushfire-destroys-homes-20111124-1nvj2.html#ixzz1eZarOGp5>

Disasters, as noted in section 2 above, have complex consequences, of which hazard survival is but one element. While this is, and should be, an important focus, noting how complex and long term the challenge posed above is, Red Cross recognises that the impacts of disaster extend beyond survival from the hazard impact, to being able to cope with the disruption that an emergency can cause to an individual's way of life. Consequently, promoting disaster resilience is a multifaceted challenge, of which hazard survival is one part of a broader equation.

While further work needs to be undertaken to develop a standard set of indicators, and a cost benefit evaluation model, anecdotally, investment in psycho-social preparedness can reduce the impact of disaster, and hence reduce the investment required in the recovery period through a lower demand on support services and assistance measures. Well prepared and connected communities tend to rely upon internal, informal resources rather than wait for outside assistance<sup>22</sup>.

### Challenges delivering public awareness programs

Evidence shows that top-down information dissemination will not lead to people choosing to prepare themselves for an emergency<sup>23</sup>. Instead, emergency management practitioners need to understand what is involved in a person's decision to be prepared and that the process of influencing behaviour must be considered a community-based process<sup>24</sup>. Resilience is a very broad and multi-faceted concept that cannot simply be delivered 'to' communities.

Influencing behaviour change is a challenging and complex process. While there is considerable expenditure on hazard education, many public information programs require further investment to ensure impact on individual-community preparedness,<sup>25</sup>

Preparedness can be viewed as the outcome of three separate, but linked, phases: motivation to prepare, formation of intentions, and the conversion of intentions into actions<sup>26</sup>. Paton explains that it is unlikely that one intervention strategy will be capable of facilitating change in all these stages. Practitioners need to understand what is involved in a person's decision to be prepared and that people interpret information differently, depending on many factors. Psychological, social, cultural, institutional and life experience all play a part and influence the meaning an individual attributes to an event and the action they will take to prepare. Information dissemination alone does not lead to people choosing to prepare.

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<sup>22</sup> Chamlee-Wright E and Storr V (2010), *Social Capital as collective narratives and post disaster recovery* Aldrich, D.P (2012) *Building Disaster Recovery*

<sup>23</sup> Coppola, D. and Maloney E., (2009), *Communicating Emergency Preparedness: Strategies for creating a disaster resilient public*, Auerbach Publications

<sup>24</sup> Paton, D., (2005) *Community Resilience Integrating Hazard Management & Community Engagement*, retrieved 12 Jan 2011 from <http://www.engagingcommunities2005.org/abstracts/S39-paton-d.html>

<sup>25</sup> Lindell, M.K & Whitney, D.J. (2000), correlates of household seismic hazard adjustment adoption, *Risk Analysis*. Vol 20, pp.13-25 ;

Paton, D., & Bishop B. (1996). Disasters and communities: Promoting psychosocial well-being. In D. Paton & N. Long (Eds.), *Psychological aspects of disaster: Impact, coping, and intervention*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.

<sup>26</sup> Paton, D, Smith, L, Johnston, D (2003). *When good intentions turn bad: promoting natural hazard preparedness*



Ideally, agencies, using a community development approach, support community members through the provision of resources and information that meet peoples' needs and expectations and in ways that facilitate their ability to act<sup>27</sup>

### Psycho-social preparedness

Red Cross has formed the view that, in many ways disaster resilience can be more complex than hazard survival. Hazard awareness, and it's translation into action, is one of five psycho-social adaptive capacities that influence an individual's disaster resilience.

This concept is shaped from Red Cross' experience in recovery, and informed by the research of Norris et al<sup>28</sup>(2008), Paton (2003)<sup>29</sup>, Aldrich (2010, 2012)<sup>30</sup>, Handmer<sup>31</sup>(2003) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement<sup>32</sup>, Boon et al (2012)<sup>33</sup>. These five capacities are:

- wellbeing
- access
- connection
- knowledge
- security

**Wellbeing** relates to a person's health and wellbeing status, including their psychological coping ability<sup>34</sup>.

**Access** relates to having a range of services available to support people in a range of activities of daily living<sup>35</sup>.

**Connection** relates to the amount of support people can draw upon, referred to as social capital, to achieve goals or shared objectives. This can be through formal or informal links such as family, friends, local groups colleagues and formal institutions<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Paton, D., & Bishop B. (1996). Disasters and communities: Promoting psychosocial well-being. In D. Paton & N. Long (Eds.), *Psychological aspects of disaster: Impact, coping, and intervention*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press

Poortinga, W., & Pidgeon, N.F. (2004). *Trust, the asymmetry principle, and the role of prior beliefs*. *Risk Analysis*, 24, 1475–1486.

<sup>28</sup> Norris, F., Stevens, S Pfefferbaum, B, Karen F. Wyche, K, Pfefferbaum, R (2008) *Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness* Am J Community Psychol (2008) 41:127–150

<sup>29</sup> Paton, D., (2003) *Disaster Preparedness: A social-cognitive perspective*. *Disaster Prevention and Management*, Vol. 12, pp. 210–216

<sup>30</sup> Aldrich, D.P (2012) *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post Disaster Recovery*

<sup>31</sup> Handmer, J., (2003), 'We are all vulnerable', in The Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol. 18 No 3. August, p56

<sup>32</sup> John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health & International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2008), *Public Health Guide in Emergencies*, 2nd ed, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>33</sup> Boon, H, Cottrell, A, King, D, Stevenson, R, & Millar, J (2012) *Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory for modelling community resilience to natural disasters*

<sup>34</sup> John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health & International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2008), *Public Health Guide in Emergencies*, 2nd ed, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>35</sup> Norris, F , Stevens, S Pfefferbaum, B, Karen F. Wyche, K, Pfefferbaum, R (2008) *Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness* Am J Community Psychol (2008) 41:127–150

Handmer, J., 2003, 'We are all vulnerable', in The Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol. 18 No 3. August, p56; Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health & International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2008), *Public Health Guide in Emergencies*, 2nd ed, Geneva, Switzerland.

**Knowledge** relates to having access to appropriate information, and local wisdom relating to hazard risk profiles and risk mitigation strategies for a geographic area, connection to their place and the capacity to process this information, and act upon it in a meaningful way.

<sup>37</sup>

**Security** relates to the ability to maintain a livelihood, and the capacity to provide financial protection of a person's/household's assets and livelihoods, for example through household insurance.<sup>38</sup>

Each of these capacities contributes to what we are calling psycho-social preparedness. The activities then that a preparedness program undertakes need to identify first what strengths individuals and households possess, and promote action to support these strengths or build capacity where there are weaknesses. These capacities are all point in time, and dynamic.

### Red Cross' Emergency REDiPlan

In 2007, the Emergency REDiPlan project was established to address an identified gap that existing preparedness activities did not tackle; the significant, sometimes intangible, immediate, medium and long term disruptive impacts of disasters on individuals, families, households, neighbourhoods and communities. Emergency REDiPlan uses these adaptive capacities as a basis for its key messages, summarised in four steps: Make a Plan; Be Informed; Get a Kit; and Know your Neighbours.

The approach was based on the questions; firstly, what is important to you?, secondly, once you survive an emergency, what do you come back to and what are the consequences to you and your family and, thirdly how can you prepare yourself in order to reduce the significant disruption that the emergency could have on your life<sup>39</sup>?

In all of its preparedness activities, Red Cross takes an all-hazards<sup>40</sup> approach, regardless of scale, acknowledging that hazard-specific information should always be delivered or informed by the relevant hazard management agency.

Research indicates that people are more likely to turn to neighbours and friends and family for support and information, acting as a so called "informal insurance"<sup>41</sup> In recent market research (2012) commissioned by Red Cross 60% of respondents selected emergency

<sup>36</sup> Norris, F, Stevens, S Pfefferbaum, B, Karen F. Wyche, K, Pfefferbaum, R (2008) *Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness* Am J Community Psychol (2008) 41:127–150,

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health & International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2008), *Public Health Guide in Emergencies*, 2nd ed, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>37</sup> Norris, F, Stevens, S Pfefferbaum, B, Karen F. Wyche, K, Pfefferbaum, R (2008) *Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness* Am J Community Psychol (2008) 41:127–150

<sup>38</sup> Handmer, J., 2003, 'We are all vulnerable', in The Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol. 18 No 3. August, p56;

John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health & International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2008), *Public Health Guide in Emergencies*, 2nd ed, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>39</sup> Richardson, J.F (2008) *Household Preparedness: a new approach* Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services Conference Proceedings

<sup>40</sup> Covering both natural and human made hazards including fires, cyclones, storms, floods, tsunamis, terrorism, industrial, transport accidents, biological outbreaks or pandemics, chemical spills, epidemic illness and electricity or gas outages.

<sup>41</sup> Aldrich, D.P (2012) *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post Disaster Recovery*

services agencies as the most likely to assist them following an emergency. In reality it is people's neighbours that are there in the immediate aftermath with one study showing that following the Kobe earthquake in Japan in 1995, 80% of those rescued were rescued by their neighbours<sup>42</sup>.

Bearing these factors in mind, Red Cross drew upon programs developed by American and Canadian Red Cross colleagues, and created *Four Steps to Prepare your Household* and added a social capital action. By following these four steps, REDiPlan aims to equip participants with the knowledge and practical tools to take action and change their behaviour, resulting in improved levels of preparedness and the ability to cope when an emergency occurs.

### **Step 1 Be Informed**

Step 1 encourages people to understand their environment and all potential threats, as well as being aware of sources of information and where to get help in an emergency.

### **Step 2 Make a Plan**

Step 2 covers making a household plan for both evacuation and staying at home, considering short term requirements and also longer term needs like insurance cover and financial security. The underlying premise is 'identifying & protecting what's important to you'

### **Step 3 Get an emergency kit**

From survival essentials like food, water, medication to valuable possessions such as passports, mementoes, and photographs – step 3 helps people to identify what their needs may be during and following an emergency.

### **Step 4 Know your neighbours**

Step 4 promotes simple community building exercises to help people get to know their neighbours and strengthen links in their community.

On a small budget of \$500,000 per annum on average, REDiPlan has been delivered to over 7,000 people Australia wide. The inaugural Red Cross National Preparedness Week, launched by the Attorney-General, Nicola Roxon MP, reached approximately 1.4 million Australians through radio, print, television and social media. The program has also garnered Australian Community Safety Awards Commendations in 2009 and 2010. Red Cross has also entered into partnerships with the South Australian, Queensland, and Victorian Governments to distribute hard copies of the resources.

Recognising that people receive information in different ways delivery of these messages is through a number of channels; primarily through trained volunteers providing small group education sessions, through volunteers and staff training agency staff to work with their clients, and through the provision of written information, both web based and hard copy (standard and easy English and audio formats).

Program planning for Emergency Rediplan has identified further developments in how to get key messages across to communities, including looking at developing new channels, as well

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<sup>42</sup> Shaw R, Ishiwatari, M and Arnold, M (2012) *Community Based Risk Management*. Knowledge Notes, Cluster 2: Nonstructural Measures, Note 2-1 World bank Institute

as developing Red Cross people to become preparedness advocates, drawing upon the 20,000 members, 37,000 volunteers, and 3,000 staff all to reach out through their networks.

Two of the four key themes underpinning Red Cross' approach to preparedness are based around social capital – community connection and community coping strategies, with social connection underpinning step four of REDiPlan – *know your neighbours*. An observation often made by participants following Red Cross community preparedness sessions is that they either hadn't known a number of the people at the session who live in their local community, or they hadn't been privy to the experiences and knowledge of fellow residents, until now.

### Future developments

A current gap in the sector is the agreement of broad based disaster resilience indicators, and the subsequent development of a cost benefit model that enables decision-makers to understand that an investment in psycho-social preparedness education will have a net benefit, both tangible through the reduction in recovery costs, and intangible through positive health and wellbeing post disaster. Further work across the sector is required to collate and articulate indicators of social capital and understand more thoroughly how emergency management agencies can help communities to build and re-build social capital. Red Cross has been working with Professor Douglas Paton of the University of Tasmania on the development of indicators and with the Torrens Resilience Institute to evaluate the Emergency REDiPlan project in Adelaide Hills.

Greater investment is required on an ongoing basis by governments, the private sector (REDiPlan was established through a three year corporate partnership), and the public, to achieve behaviour change. The current funding requirements of the National Disaster Resilience Grants programs do not lend themselves to long term sustainable outcomes. Red Cross has been successful in obtaining funding under this program for one year projects, including in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Northern Territory, and the ACT. The short term nature of the projects has meant it has been difficult to build sustainability.

Red Cross suggests a restructure of the NDRG program in relation to household preparedness, creating a longer term 3 to 5 year program structure for funding, with greater certainty for funders and recipients. Red Cross also recommends that programs that have broader psycho-social focus be given priority within the funding rounds, as hazard specific programs are funded, in the main, from within agency recurrent funds. Ideally, psycho-social preparedness program development and coordination should also be funded on a recurrent basis, preferably from a central fund, rather than relying upon grant rounds or state funding bodies. This would allow for strategic planning of these programs, and sustainability through a range of partnerships including with corporate and philanthropic supporters and promoting true shared responsibility, as identified in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

### Recommendations

Red Cross recommends:

- That all disaster awareness preparedness programs factor in the psycho-social impacts as a key component.
- That ongoing program development and coordination funding should be provided to agencies to enable planning and partnership development.

- That implementation funding take a longer term view, recognising that it takes 2 to 5 years to achieve sustainable change at a community level.
- That a cost benefit model of community education programs be developed and used as an important component of funding decision making.
- That further exploration of the role of social capital in disaster resilience occurs, and the development of practical indicators be undertaken to assist with community level preparedness programs.

## Maintaining an effective volunteer workforce to cope with increased complex challenges

This section addresses the terms of reference number (d) and covers:

- The challenge of maintaining a trained volunteer workforce
- The adequacy of funding arrangements for readiness activities

*Sleeping on the floor sleeping in tents, eating in the rain, getting that smile from a thankful person who has suffered due to a disaster, Red Cross being thanked by those in need, for being a Red Cross volunteer makes it all worth while. One young boy after having a game of cricket while his parents were in the evacuation centre, even mentioned when we come back another time can I bring my cricket bat. Another person during Cyclone Yasi with dark glasses (she had been crying) very diplomatically asked where she could get some thing to eat, that really shook me. Watching old men in the evacuation centre with little dogs that had been evacuated (their only belongings) buckle down for the night and get on with living. Emergency Services Volunteer, Queensland*

These comments from the field reflect the critical role of volunteers in emergency management.

A key priority of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience is for decision makers to “adopt policies and practices that support and recognise emergency services and the importance of volunteering in our communities”<sup>43</sup>. One of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the changing nature of volunteering. Volunteering has moved from a static commitment to an organisation to one that is more cause focussed and often time limited. This shift makes it challenging for organisations to recruit, train, engage and retain volunteers on a long term basis. Expectations of volunteers have also changed, with a shift to more educated and skilled workforce.

The provision of services to support people to prepare for, assist with meeting their basic relief needs and recover from disaster is increasingly being understood as a complex and dynamic issue that requires sensitive and skilled management<sup>44</sup>. These issues include dealing with people under a great deal of stress, marginalised people with issues relating to homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental illness. This recognition signals a need to shift the view of emergency relief from a ‘welfare’ approach of managing on the fly, to recognising that the situations people are dealing with are volatile, and have a high risk element, and that people during disasters have the right to be treated with dignity, and have complex needs that require skilled personnel to deal with. The development of capacity for

<sup>43</sup> Council of Australian Governments (2011) *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* p13

<sup>44</sup> Sphere (2010) *Sphere Standards for Humanitarian Response*

emergency relief, and recovery activities should be treated no differently to the development of capacity for the emergency response activities, e.g. fire fighting, flood rescue etc. However, while state fire services and emergency services are funded by State Governments to provide a range of services, this funding is generally not available for the development of relief or recovery capacity. As a result, there is a strong reliance on the goodwill of agencies and their supporters to provide relief and recovery services and activities.

It has become increasingly obvious to volunteer dependent organisations that they not only need to manage their volunteers better and with more skill, but they and their volunteers are vital to the continuing development of healthy, flourishing, democratic communities and societies. They need to effectively recruit and retain volunteers and for those volunteers in turn to be able to contribute positively and meaningfully to the sustainability of their volunteering organisation. ABS General Social Survey (2010) also indicates that more Australians are volunteering, but for less time. This means rising costs for volunteer engagement and support activities as well as infrastructure improvements due to rapidly changing technology, rise of social media, and communication channels.

There is also a call from the peak body Volunteering Australia as well as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent to invest in building the capacity of volunteer trainers, leaders and coordinators. If organisations seek to build capacity and community resilience, then focusing on training and development of these roles (quality) can be more effective than increasing the number of volunteers (quantity). Professional volunteer management competencies are recognised and the need for accreditation of these roles is a pressing need.

As an example, Red Cross invests nearly \$7million of donated funds into the Emergency Services program. This investment by Red Cross supports the recruitment, training, and support of 7,700 volunteers, by 70 staff nationwide. These volunteers perform a range of increasingly complex tasks including evacuation centre management, incident management, psychological first aid, and longer term recovery outreach support. It has been calculated that it costs approximately \$150<sup>45</sup> to have a Red Cross volunteer ready to deploy, and our staff to volunteer ratio is 1 to 400. Given the increase in the number and impact of extreme weather events, to maintain and grow this level of support for the Australian community without additional government support is challenging.

Red Cross suggests that Governments look to share the responsibility for the costs of developing the capacity to respond to people's relief and recovery needs, in the same way that they support more traditional response based fire and emergency services. Governments should consider funding program development and volunteer management costs for agencies engaged in emergency relief.

In addition, funding for operational activities across the country can be inconsistent and unclear. While costs for relief and recovery operations are shared by State/Territory and the Australian Government under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements<sup>46</sup>, the application of these arrangements is varied. Hence, there can be a situation where in one state an organisation may be fully reimbursed for the costs it incurs, in another state there may need to be a discussion with the state government, leaving the agency potentially financially exposed, and in some states reimbursement of costs may not be entertained.

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<sup>45</sup> Based upon direct staff engagement with the recruitment, training and engagement of volunteers. Other staff costs are involved in program management, operational readiness, and preparedness and recovery activities.

<sup>46</sup> Minister for Emergency Management (2012) *Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements*

## Recommendations

Red Cross recommends:

- That the Council of Australian Governments/MCPEM agree to a funding model that reflects the lifecycle of emergency management, that includes recurrent 3 to 5 year funding for emergency relief and recovery agencies to maintain and build capacity to meet future challenges.
- That NDRRA arrangements are reviewed to create a consistent application across the country, and encourage transparency in plans and decision making for the trigger of cost recovery measures.

## Planning for long term recovery

This section addresses the terms of reference number (d) and covers:

- The challenge of developing recovery capacity
- The adequacy of funding arrangements for recovery activities

*'Recovery from natural and other disasters does not depend on the overall amount of aid received nor on the amount of damage done by the disaster; instead, social capital – the bonds which tie citizens together – functions as the main engine of long term recovery.'*<sup>47</sup>

Daniel P. Aldrich

The impacts of extreme weather are long, dynamic and complex. Effective recovery planning and supports need to take these factors into account.

Australian government bodies have agreed on a consistent model of recovery across the country and a set of National principles. This model shows that there are four key environments in recovery (psycho-social environment, built environment, natural environment and economic environment) that comprise recovery, and demonstrate the importance of these environments being integrated, with community being the lynch pin that links them all together. Red Cross acknowledges this model as the agreed recovery model in Australia.

The National Principles for Disaster Recovery are outlined in the Community Recovery handbook<sup>48</sup> as being:

- Understanding the **context**
- Recognising **complexity**
- Using **community-led** approaches
- Ensuring **coordination** of all activities
- Employing effective **communication**
- Acknowledging and building **capacity**

Integral to the success of any recovery program is an underpinning in psycho-social support. The IFRC Psycho-social Framework defines psycho-social support as 'a process of

<sup>47</sup> Aldrich, D.P., (2010), 'Fixing Recovery: Social Capital in Post-Crisis Resilience' in *Journal of Homeland Security*, retrieved 18 Oct 2011 from [http://works.bepress.com/daniel\\_aldrich/7](http://works.bepress.com/daniel_aldrich/7)

<sup>48</sup> Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series – Community Recovery 2011 p20-25

facilitating resilience within individuals, families and communities'. By respecting the independence, dignity and coping mechanisms of individuals and communities, psycho-social support promotes the restoration of social cohesion and infrastructure. Red Cross implements community-based psycho-social support which concentrates on strengthening the social bonds of people in affected communities, by improving the psycho-social well-being of individuals and communities as whole entities. The approach is based on the idea that if people are empowered to care for themselves and each other, their individual and communal self-confidence and resources will improve. This in turn will encourage positive recovery and strengthen their ability to deal with challenges in the future.<sup>49</sup>

Central to this are psychological first aid principles which provide an excellent underpinning or 'test' to measure any direct services that we provide to emergency affected individuals and communities. At all times, what we are doing aims to:

- Promote safety
- Promote calm
- Promote connectedness
- Promote self-efficacy
- Promote help
- Promote hope

While experience, research and best practice guidelines all indicate that the impacts of extreme weather events have long term and complex implications for affected people, planning for recovery activities is generally undertaken on a short term basis. In part this short term planning is driven by media and political considerations and partly by a view that people need more assistance immediately after an event rather than in the longer term.

During the Black Saturday Bushfires, Red Cross continued relief and early recovery operations, while tasking two recovery planners to undertake a needs assessment to identify where gaps in existing programs might exist. As a result of this 3 month assessment, a range of programs and activities were developed that met identified needs, a sound funding submission crafted, and on implementation, were well received by communities. Some of these supports continue to be delivered. This experience highlights the dual need to support people's immediate needs, as well as take the time to plan, and replan as circumstances change, have the flexibility to adapt.

While there is an increasing amount of research being undertaken, there is a general acknowledgment that recovery is the least researched part of emergency management<sup>50</sup>. Further work needs to be undertaken to better understand the recovery context, and define key success factors.

Recovery cost benefit analyses do not exist and as a result it is difficult to quantify the benefits of recovery programs. Our experience and some research indicate that many of the long term impacts of emergencies (including extreme weather events) include increases in:

- Physical and mental health issues
- Family violence
- Relationship breakdown
- Community network breakdowns

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<sup>49</sup> IFRC Psychosocial Interventions handbook

<sup>50</sup> Smith & Wenger 2007 as in Nicholls & Healy (2008) *Communication with disaster survivors: towards best practice*. Australian Journal of Emergency Management vol 23, No.3 2008



Cost benefit analyses are required to inform decision makers that further investment in recovery programs, particularly ones that are community development based and promote social capital, is required.

Governance models also require examination to ensure the optimal support for people affected by disaster. Best practice worldwide, as highlighted in the National Recovery Principles is that community led recovery is the most effective model, as the community has most at stake in their future. For large scale events, however, Governments tend to appoint top down driven authorities or taskforces, with a scope to streamline resource acquisition. Recent experiences in Australia and New Zealand have indicated that the establishment of these taskforces require lead time for scaling up both capacity and capability in understanding the environment in which they are operating.

Where a geographic community is impacted by an extreme weather event, it is vital that as far as possible local 'everyday' services are enhanced in the recovery period, rather than the creation of new services. The pre-existing services will be in place long after temporary services cease. However, most local services will require additional funding to increase capacity, as well as the development of the capability to understand and work well within the recovery context.

Red Cross is promoting this capacity building approach through the development of a range of resources and training aimed at empowering local agencies. These resources support local agencies to develop a better understanding of the 'new' context they may be operating in. Current training and information sessions available include 'Communicating in Recovery', which focuses on helping local agencies understand the challenges of communicating in a post emergency environment, and 'Community Recovery Information Series' which is a modular based set of information and activities to help community leaders and understand some of the common challenges they may face in recovery.

Recovery requires a long term commitment to build capacity<sup>51</sup>. Despite evidence that there will be an increase in demand for recovery support as the incidence of emergencies such as extreme weather events increases, the current status of the recovery workforce in Australia is limited at best, and is mainly based on a few central positions.

## Recommendations

Red Cross recommends:

- That government's across Australia adopt consistent needs assessment processes to inform recovery planning.
- That all Australian government's fund recovery on a long term basis (minimum of 2 years, with consideration of extension).
- That the development of a permanent, appropriately skilled recovery workforce at a national, state/territory and local level be prioritised.
- That existing recovery capacity within governments and non government agencies is further developed, such that an understanding is reached that recovery is everyone's business.
- That further research and modelling is undertaken of recovery models and programs including a cost benefit framework.

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<sup>51</sup> Council of Australian Governments (2011) *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*

## Impact of extreme weather on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities

This section addresses the Terms of Reference (c, and d) and covers:

- The work that Red Cross is undertaking in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities manage disasters.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most disadvantaged members of Australian society<sup>52</sup>. Factors in this determinant include geographic and isolated location of communities, inadequate infrastructure and services within communities, high comparative levels of socio- economic disadvantage, poor health status, limited access to resources and limited capacity to engage in social and economic development opportunities. These issues make for a complex set of challenges for emergency management.<sup>53</sup> Many remote and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are situated in areas that are subject to extreme weather events, such as cyclones, bushfires and flooding. These natural events can form part of the world view of the indigenous peoples<sup>54</sup>

A major challenge that exists in building disaster resilient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities tends to be that addressing disaster risk management is less of a priority in communities in comparison to other fundamental social and health problems found in these communities. This is a view echoed in the Australian Government publication *Keeping our Mob Safe Strategy*.

Over the course of a pilot project undertaken in the Northern Territory, Red Cross was able to consult, engage and share knowledge with 120 people in 8 communities, including key Aboriginal organisations. It was evident that there was a high level of individual and family resilience; however the perceived risk was the lack of communication, coordination and local representation surrounding disaster preparedness and response.

Central to the thinking and approach of any program is to build on existing resilience that already exists within Aboriginal communities. In each community there is a rich tradition, language and culture, strong connections and relationships and extensive traditional knowledge in relation to weather and extreme weather. The key to working in remote communities, as a result of the time required to build trust and relationships over long distances, is to use existing community based programs. Through these programs, with existing infrastructure and relationships, emergency management capacity can be developed according to local needs.

Improving emergency management outcomes for remote Indigenous communities means that associated systems and structures needs to be informed by the cultural need and perspectives of those communities. This is what will determine a community's willingness to engage around disaster resilience; local ownership and a locally driven program.

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<sup>52</sup> Red Cross (2008) *Background paper: Issues and Trends- Indigenous Australia*,

<sup>53</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2007) *Keeping our Mob Safe*

<sup>54</sup> Berendt R and Berendt C (1989) *The Speaking Land* Penguin

Again, these activities also need to be funded on a long term basis, beyond the current approach mentioned above in section 5 and 6.

Red Cross believes that there is a lot that key resilience building agencies can learn from an increased knowledge and information exchange with Aboriginal people and communities. By promoting an open dialogue around resilience to disasters, further developing advocacy and communication pathways, facilitating appropriate education and awareness information and increasing collaboration to map appropriate strategies, Red Cross can work with communities to reduce the negative impacts caused by disasters.

## Recommendations

Red Cross recommends:

- That further research into the application of traditional knowledge to emergency management is required.
- That a sustainable funding model is developed to support capacity building programs and activities in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## Impact on other vulnerable members of the Australian community

This section addresses the Terms of Reference (c, and d) and covers:

- The impact of disasters on our client base.

Through migration support, social inclusion and locational disadvantage programs, Red Cross supports disadvantaged people to lead more resilient lives. Many of our clients; frail isolated elderly people, homeless people, asylum seekers and refugees, people with a disability are amongst the more vulnerable to the impact of extreme weather. Anecdotally, of people who sheltered in evacuation centres in Queensland during the 2011 floods, a significant number were people who had no alternatives, and were a group of people who had mental health issues, disability or were homeless<sup>55</sup>. This was also apparent with Hurricane Katrina in the US in 2005, where those who sheltered in the Superdome and convention centre did not have the financial means or the physical capacity to evacuate<sup>56</sup>.

It is well documented that extreme weather, through heat, storms, floods or fires can have a range of impacts. Extreme heat can exacerbate existing physical and mental health conditions, causing an increase in deaths or hospital admissions<sup>57</sup>. The elements of the various extreme weather events can impact on vulnerable people's ability to remove themselves from.

<sup>55</sup> Australian Red Cross (2010) *Submission to Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry*

<sup>56</sup> Brunsmma, D Overfelt, D and Picou, J (2010) *The Sociology of Katrina: Perspectives on a Modern Catastrophe*

<sup>57</sup> Price Waterhouse Coopers (2012) *Protecting human health and safety during severe and extreme heat events*.

Climate Commission (2013) *Off the Charts Extreme Australian Summer Heat* Australian Red Cross (2012) *Review of Telecross Redi in South Australia* report by PWC

Klingenberg, E (2003) *Heatwave: A social autopsy of disaster in Chicago*

One of the challenges in emergency management has been to find a meaningful approach to targeting support to people more vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather. Traditionally, the approach has been to create lists of people that are under 5 or over 70, or have identified as having a disability or being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. However, these factors alone do not make people vulnerable, and there are many examples of individuals who fit into these categories, yet are very resilient. As noted in Section 4, the five adaptive capacities, Wellbeing, Access, Connection, Knowledge and Security provide a key for agencies to target their preparedness, response and recovery work.

In January and February 2009, South Australia suffered a heatwave that claimed many lives and hospitalised many people. Extreme heat also has a significant impact on frail elderly and people with health conditions. In South Australia Red Cross operates Telecross REDi which assists vulnerable people to prepare for and cope with extreme weather events by regularly calling them during such events. This proactive service is activated by the South Australian Department for Communities and Social Inclusion when an extreme weather event such as a heatwave is declared. An evaluation undertaken by Price Waterhouse Coopers on behalf of Red Cross found that the service accesses key 'at risk groups' and is highly valued by clients, their carers, emergency contacts, staff, volunteers, government and referral agencies. This high approval rating extends to culturally diverse and Aboriginal clients. Over a third of clients said the service was a trigger for them to change their behaviour, and prepare for extreme heat events.

Red Cross' experience suggests that the most appropriate approach to help reach vulnerable people prepare for and support them through and after an extreme weather event, is through the agencies that work with them on a regular basis. Rather than design programs that directly engage with vulnerable groups, a more effective way is to adopt a capacity building approach for agencies. As an example, each year Red Cross' Emergency Services team in Darwin holds a cyclone briefing session with the Home and Community Care (HACC) team, so that the HACC workers can help their clients prepare for the oncoming cyclone season.

## Recommendations

Red Cross recommends:

- That vulnerable members of the Australian community are targeted for support to build disaster resilience, through supporting existing human service providers.
- That consideration be given to examining ways of reducing the financial burden of preparedness activities for members of the community facing financial challenges. This includes examining affordable insurance.

## Impacts of increased overseas extreme weather events on the Australian community

This section addresses the terms of reference number (d) and covers:

- The impact of extreme weather in our region
- The capacity of Australia to support countries within the region

Over the decade (2002-2011), climato-hydro-meteorological disasters, affected 2.6 billion people of a total 2.7 billion people affected by disasters. Climato-hydro-meteorological disasters killed nearly half a million people (nearly 300,000 in Asia and Oceania) of a total 1.2 million people killed by disasters (including man-made disasters)<sup>58</sup>. According to a report by Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research the last decade brought unprecedented heatwaves such as the one in Australia in 2009 and Europe in 2003.

Extreme weather will impact not just Australia, but also the Asia Pacific region. This will put pressure on Australia to increase disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response activities in the region, particularly to support the more vulnerable Pacific Island nations. Many such programs are currently funded by AusAID as well as through public donations to Red Cross, so there will be a greater call on public funds, either through donations or government funds.

Forced migration due to natural-hazards/disasters has attracted more attention in recent years as the statistics become more significant. Globally, between 2008 and 2011 alone, 110 million people were displaced due to disasters, out of a total of 341 million refugees and internally displaced people (32%). This statistic is important to consider because displacement increases vulnerability of affected communities.

While Australia has strong engagement with our Pacific partners, supporting capacity building efforts, the increasing impact of extreme weather in the region will require more assistance for small nations dealing with their impact, as well as the impact of climate change. This will require a greater investment in preparedness and response activities, which Australia as a nation will be increasingly asked and required to support

The Australian National Climate Change Adaptation Framework also acknowledges the need to explore adaptation strategies internationally and within Australia. Continued support for climate change adaptation programs at the grassroots level, particularly in the Pacific and in Asia, is essential to protect communities vulnerable to the impact of climate change. This also has an implication on future levels of migration to Australia due to climate change.

## Recommendations

Red Cross recommends:

- That there be greater recognition of the need for preparedness to respond to more severe and more frequent extreme weather emergencies in Asia and the Pacific region.
- That continued support for climate change adaptation programs exist at the community level in Asia and the Pacific.

## Australia's emergency management governance arrangements

This section addresses the Terms of Reference number (e) and covers:

- National governance arrangements
- Variability of state based arrangements

<sup>58</sup> *IFRC, World Disasters Report, 2012, Tables 6, 7 and 10 (pp 262-271).*

- Interface between state and territories
- Role of local government

Australia's emergency management governance has generally served it well. However, the governance bodies have had a varying level of representation from non government participants in emergency management. Given the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience's recognition that emergency management and disaster resilience is a partnership between communities, agencies, the private sector, and governments, then the membership of these committees should reflect this "shared responsibility" Government's, responsibility for policy development, will end up with a much richer policy and practice environment, if they include a broader membership base, at all levels of governance.

Given the Federal nature of our system, and the primacy of states and territories in emergency management, effort should be undertaken to streamlining and standardizing approaches to emergency management, including assistance measures. Given the connectedness of Australian communities and the access to information, assistance measures between disasters can be easily compared. We are now seeing multiple and concurrent disasters (eg Queensland and Victorian Floods 2011, Victorian Bushfires and Queensland Floods 2009, Tasmanian Bushfires and Victorian/NSW fires 2013), and on the basis of equity, wherever a person lives, they should have access to the same standard and level of support.

The Australian Government has confirmed the distinct partnership it shares with its sovereign Red Cross National Society through our Royal Charter, ratification of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols, as well as through resolutions and pledges agreed upon at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. A specific goal of the 27th International Conference called upon States, including Australia, where necessary, to incorporate linkages to international systems of disaster response in their national disaster preparedness plans as well as to include clearly defined roles and responsibilities for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, including representation on appropriate national policy and coordination bodies.

Australian Red Cross for its part is now seeking to ensure these commitments are fully embodied in our relationship with government. In the international emergencies arena this has been achieved through formal recognition by AusAID of the unique auxiliary role of Red Cross in the whole of government Humanitarian Action Plan.

In the domestic emergencies sphere Red Cross holds the view that representation on the Australia New Zealand Emergency Management Committee, and relevant sub committees, would be consistent with these commitments. The fundamental principles of the organisation, that include Neutrality and Impartiality, provide reassurance that matters of great sensitivity can be handled by Red Cross. As evidence, the Red Cross international work in conflict zones, as well as closer to home the partnership, strategic advice and support that Red Cross has provided both state and Australian Governments during and since the Black Saturday Bushfires in February 2009 and floods and cyclones of 2011.

## Recommendations

Red Cross recommends:

- That a stronger focus is given to the role of not for profits and corporates as contributors to policy and practice development.

- That the significant role of not for profits at national and state/territory level should be reflected through membership of the ANZEMC and its sub committees.
- That, through its unique and internationally recognised mandate as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, Red Cross should be appointed as a key member of the ANZEMC.