

Community Disaster Preparation

Resilient communities

www.communitydisasterprep.com.au

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What makes a resilient community?

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2009) describes out how a national, coordinated and cooperative effort is needed for Australia to withstand and recover from emergencies and disasters.

One of the main factors in successful resilience is a cohesive community: one that works together to understand and manage the risks that it confronts.

The full strategy can be found at [link](#). This Resource summarises the features of resilient *local* communities, with suggestions as to how to build capacity in your community.



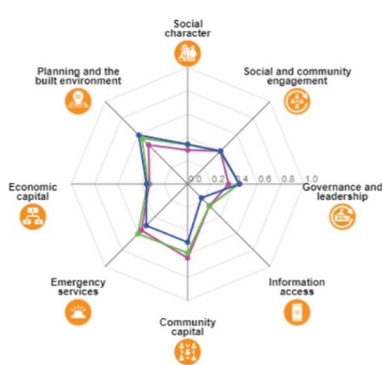
Photo courtesy of blog.ioby.org

Provision of information alone does not increase preparedness, it needs to be a socially embedded process – part of the culture of the community. Lukasiewicz et al (2017), Peters (2012).

Your community's resilience

You may have a good sense of how well your community engages and collaborates, but it's useful to see this from other perspectives. The [Australian Disaster Resilience Index](#)¹ provides indicators resilience in eight themes at SA2 (suburb/locality) level.

ADRI graphs show how your community (the purple line) compares with similar communities in your state and nationally. The ADRI resilience themes that can be addressed within communities are:



- social character: factors that influence the ability to prepare for and recover from a disaster (individual and household capacity)
- social and community engagement: the ability of communities to adapt, learn and transform in the face of complex change (social engagement, trust, cooperation, learning and wellbeing)
- community capital: cohesion and connectedness of the community for mutual benefit (participation in social networks and ability to work with others e.g. in mutual self-help groups)²

¹ For more information see the *Using data to identify 'at risk' communities RESOURCE*

² See <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/file/11555/download?token=KF47vejz> for details about the development of the indicators

What makes a resilient community RESOURCE

How do you score?

Give yourself a score from 1 = totally unprepared to 5 = very well prepared.

Resilience factor ³	How does your community score?
1. Our community (including people who generally don't get involved) has good information about local hazards and we understand the risks, including risks to people who are most vulnerable	
2. We have taken action to prepare for disasters and have a written disaster preparation plan	
3. Our local leaders – and our community – are able to adapt and be flexible during emergencies	
4. Residents and businesses in our community have prepared their properties and livelihoods to minimise losses	
5. We have discussed and planned what we need to do to get our social networks, institutions (like churches and service groups) and businesses up and running as quickly as possible	
6. Our local leaders, community groups and community networks work well together	
7. We have processes and networks in place to support individuals and families in a time of crisis	
8. We have a good working relationship with our local emergency services, council and other organisations and have planned how we will work together in an emergency	
9. Our emergency plans reflect local knowledge and we know how community actions will complement the work of emergency services	
10. Our emergency services (like SES, CFS and SA Ambulance Service) are well supported with active and capable volunteers	
Total	

How did you go?

Less than 20	Low resilience, urgent action required – develop a plan to get things moving
21-30	Prioritise factors with low scores where you can make real gains
31-40	Focus on the gaps and build capabilities with the community
40+	Great work, make sure your plans and networks stay up-to-date

³ Adapted from *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* (“What does a disaster resilient community look like?”)

What makes a resilient community RESOURCE

What can we do to improve community resilience?

The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* makes the following recommendations, supplemented with ideas from a local perspective.

Communicate and educate people about risks

- BEFORE:** Risks can be reduced but they cannot be eliminated. Risks should be openly discussed in order to anticipate and manage them. Organise planning and training so that people know what they have to do and are able to act under pressure. Involve the community in planning, actions and review of progress so disaster preparedness stays 'top of mind'.
- DURING:** Minimise harm by activating plans, taking the advice/instructions of emergency services, and providing a conduit for reliable information.
- AFTER:** Organise or attend debriefing sessions to identify what could be improved in future emergencies, update plans accordingly. Re-evaluate risks (including risks to mental health) during the recovery phase and involve the community in developing solutions to assist in the recovery process.

Partner with those who effect change

- BEFORE:** Partnerships across and within governments, businesses, the not-for-profit sector and the community will create a well-informed, integrated and coordinated approach to disaster resilience.
- DURING:** Use community networks and structures to get information and support to the right people at the right time.
- AFTER:** Businesses can play an important role in preparing for and dealing with the consequences of an emergency and help the community to maintain continuity of services following a disaster.

Empower individuals to take responsibility

- BEFORE:** Fundamental to the concept of disaster resilience is that individuals and communities should be more self-reliant and prepared to take responsibility for the risks they live with. All members of the community need to understand their role in minimising the impacts of disasters, and have the relevant knowledge, skills and abilities to take appropriate action. Individuals and businesses need to understand the availability and coverage of insurance, including the risks that are included and excluded from their existing insurance policies.
- DURING:** Members of a disaster resilient community have the confidence to seek information from multiple trusted sources to be better informed about local hazards and risks, and are able to exercise choice on how to deal with them.
- AFTER:** The community may have changed significantly: people may be injured or have died, some have moved away, recovery workers may move in. Individuals need to be able to adapt to the new situation and engage with new processes and arrangements to assist their own and their community's recovery.
- The time spent recovering from disaster is often one of strong reflection; it can be a time when new choices are made and learning occurs. Recovery programs should provide support for people to review their decisions and lifestyles to reduce their future exposure to disaster.