



COMMUNITY ORGANISATION INVOLVEMENT IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Severe to catastrophic disasters pose the potential to overwhelm traditional emergency management approaches, necessitating the adoption of a whole-of-community approach.

A key component of the whole-of-community approach is building collaborative partnerships between communities, government agencies, community organisations and businesses across the phases of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to engage their full capacity.

To date there has been little research examining the role of Australian community organisations in disaster management although many organisations provide assistance. This research focuses specifically on the role and involvement of community organisations in disaster management.

Pertinent findings of the research were:

- Community organisations provide essential functions to support community resilience. They are part of the community fabric and their core business is building community resilience. There are significant opportunities to invest in the capabilities of community organisations to further build community resilience, to bolster critical capabilities required in the event of severe to catastrophic disasters and to integrate them further in disaster management through the adoption of a whole-of-community approach.
- Community organisations represent significant value for investment. Community organisations have played valuable roles before, during and after disasters with little funding support, often relying on the goodwill of volunteers and staff. The significant volume of service delivery provided considerably outweighs the levels of funding provided. Community organisations are critical to community-led disaster recovery initiatives: it would be impossible to achieve community involvement in recovery without community organisations.
- Unlike some government organisations, community organisations are not hazard specific but may have certain specialist capabilities.
- Community organisations are undertaking a wide diversity of roles reflecting their diverse capabilities. These roles include engaging communities to build disaster awareness and preparedness, advocacy to promote resilience, research to enhance disaster management, assistance at evacuation centres, registration of disaster victims, provision of emergency communications, assistance in identifying vulnerable people, emergency catering, dissemination of emergency warnings and information, provision of mental health and wellbeing support (psychological first aid, pastoral care), outreach, assistance in recovery centres, financial counselling, food donations, material aid, impact assessment,



advocacy, dissemination of recovery information, recovery leadership, financial support, temporary accommodation, management of spontaneous volunteers, service referrals, organisation of public appeals, clean-up and reconstruction.

- Community organisations are already working effectively in collaboration with government, businesses and each other. Collaborations can either be formal or informal. In some instances, the values of organisations may not align, or there may be competition between organisations that may reduce incentives to collaborate. Community organisations can act independently, enabling services to be targeted to certain identified needs and outside the bureaucracy of government.
- Arrangements between government and community organisations vary in individual jurisdictions, making it difficult for larger community organisations to define consistent roles. Community organisations have a degree of trust in their relationships with government organisations.
- Key strengths of community organisations include understanding of community needs; access to local knowledge, skills and experience; ability to focus on people who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged; having pre-existing links to at-risk communities and their diversity of membership. People can be more comfortable dealing with community organisations than government and hold more trust in community organisations.
- Community organisations have a strong appetite to become more involved in disaster management although, ultimately, are resource constrained. Community organisations are motivated by benefit to their community and to provide a critical service or good to enable community functioning.
- There are barriers to further involvement of community organisations including funding, funding flexibility, lack of role definition and a government-centric culture to disaster management. Lack of funding reduces certainty for community organisations to be able to plan their involvement in disaster management.
- Community organisations are subject to disruption due to disasters. Such disruption may adversely impact communities: in particular, the most vulnerable. Business resilience is critical to ensure the availability of community organisations following disasters. At present, there are gaps in the readiness of community organisations that must be addressed. Existing efforts to promote business resilience have had only limited effectiveness.
- Community organisations perceive that, to enhance their involvement, they would require further funding, funding flexibility, training, greater collaboration and recognition.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for consideration to improve the utilisation of capabilities offered by community organisations in disaster management.

1. Australian disaster management doctrine should be revised to embrace a whole-of-community approach to disaster management.
2. The role of community organisations including peak bodies should be clearly defined in relevant emergency plans.
3. Community organisations should be involved in government-led disaster planning and exercises, including involvement in relevant emergency management committees.
4. Local councils should form community resilience committees to promote collaboration and joint planning between government, community organisations and local businesses. These committees could be sub-committees of relevant emergency management committees.
5. Government emergency management organisations should collectively work with community organisations to develop an understanding of community networks and community organisation capabilities.
6. Government funding bodies should enable funding flexibility to allow community organisations to integrate disaster management initiatives into their core business activities.
7. Specific disaster management grants should be targeted to community organisations to assist with maturing of disaster management capabilities and engagement with communities.
8. Funding arrangements should enable collaboration between different community organisations, businesses and government.
9. Community organisation peak bodies should take an active role in building the disaster management capabilities of their members.
10. Emergency management organisations should work with community organisation peak bodies to develop a training strategy to upskill the staff and volunteers of community organisations in relevant disaster management roles. This could include a toolkit for community organisations to provide guidance on roles and better practice.
11. Peak bodies and emergency management organisations should work with universities and training providers to incorporate emergency management content in relevant degree and training programs.



12. Community organisations should work to develop business resilience plans. These can be supported by relevant toolkits tailored to community organisations.
13. States and Territories should include community organisations within capability maturity assessments.
14. The roles performed by community organisations in disaster management should be continually evaluated to ensure robust measurement of the value provided by community organisations.
15. State and Territories should implement initiatives to raise the awareness of the role of community organisations in disaster management. These could include:
 - a. Integration of the role of community organisations within emergency management training
 - b. Inclusion of community organisations in policy development and emergency management forums
 - c. Specific communications outlining the role and value of including community organisations in disaster management
 - d. Senior leadership involvement as champions.
16. Community recovery programs should include the provision of mental health and wellbeing support to members of community organisations.



INTRODUCTION

Numerous reviews have concluded that Australia is ill-prepared to cope with a truly catastrophic disaster — an event of sufficient magnitude to exhaust the combined response capacity of all jurisdictions (Council of Australian Governments, 2002, Smith, 2008, Government of Western Australia, 2017, Catastrophic Disasters Emergency Management Capability Working Group, 2005).

Given identified weaknesses and the need to support ongoing efforts to better prepare for catastrophic disaster risks, there is an urgent research need to investigate how organisations and communities prepare, respond and recover from such disaster events.

Previous Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre research identified the need to adopt a 'whole-of-community approach' to emergency management (Gissing et al., 2018), acknowledging that disaster management is typically performed by a network of diverse groups and organisations (Comfort and Kapucu, 2006).

The whole-of-community approach has been described thus:

As a concept, Whole Community is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organisational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. By doing so, a more effective path to societal security and resilience is built. In a sense, Whole Community is a philosophical approach on how to think about conducting emergency management (FEMA, 2011; p. 3).

A key component of the whole-of-community approach is building collaborative partnerships between communities, government agencies, community organisations and businesses across the phases of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to engage their full capacity. Little academic research has been undertaken into how such collaboration can be formed in the context of Australia, although such non-government organisations have a long history of involvement in emergency management.

This research focuses specifically on the role and involvement of community organisations in disaster management. Community organisations are defined as organisations engaged in charitable or other community-based activity and not established for the purpose of making a profit (Australian Government, 2016). Community organisations are diverse in nature. Examples include neighborhood centres, faith-based organisations, charities, community housing providers and service clubs. Many thousands of large and small community organisations exist across Australia in communities of all sizes, including organisations with national to local community scope. Organisations can comprise both paid staff and volunteers.

Community organisations provide a range of services including community health, mental health support, housing support, child and family services, youth services, family violence support, legal services, aged care services, migrant and



refugee services, disability support, financial counselling, community development and neighborhood houses and learning centres (VCOSS, 2013). They provide an interface between government and individuals (Drennan and Morrissey, 2019).

In these roles, the community sector interacts with vulnerable community members. Being locally based, the community sector brings local knowledge of community needs and their associated vulnerabilities (VCOSS, 2013). Specific skills and insights that could be provided by the community sector include having regular contact with community members, knowing who is vulnerable and where they live and experience in assisting the community to prepare, respond and recover from disasters (ACOSS, 2014).

The purpose of this research is to better understand the roles and involvement of community organisations in disaster management and how community organisations collaborate with governments and businesses as part of a whole-of-community approach to disaster management.

PREVIOUS BNHCRC RESEARCH

Previous research through the BNHCRC involving interviews with government emergency managers (Gissing et al., 2018) found:

- Community organisations are already significantly woven into the fabric of government and some already play significant roles in emergency management, though levels of engagement were said to vary across jurisdictions.
- Community organisations were recognised as an essential part of any rapid expansion approach to bolster capability in the event of a catastrophe. Community organisations were seen as having a good knowledge of working with government, given that many of their services are funded by government.
- Community organisations were viewed as having significant links to communities through their routine service delivery, being effective community advocates, in some cases having access to international expertise with experience in catastrophic disasters and as being more agile than governments at times. The agility and flexibility of community organisations to assist in a catastrophic disaster can be underscored by the ability to establish fit-for-purpose organisations: for example, BlazeAid that grew from emergent volunteer activity following the Black Saturday Bushfires. The working connections that NGOs have with businesses and other NGOs were also seen as beneficial.
- Although there was some acknowledgement of the significant capabilities that community organisations can offer in supporting response and recovery some felt that community organisation capabilities could be better understood. Further, emergency managers believed that engagement with community organisations could be improved.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Community organisations are ideally placed to deliver a wide diversity of different support services to build resilience and support communities through disasters (Mallon et al., 2013, Drennan and Morrissey, 2019, Redshaw et al., 2017, Villeneuve, 2018, Brookfield and Fitzgerald, 2018, Pertiwi et al., 2019). Such services include personal support and advice, psychological first aid, emergency food and health care, outreach, temporary accommodation, counselling, social support referrals, community building, emergency preparedness raising and assistance with emergency planning (VCOSS, 2013). Organisations can possess specialist capabilities such as the ability to connect with vulnerable individuals with specialist needs; specialists skills including case management, counselling and volunteer management and specialist assets such as disability transport and emergency catering equipment (VCOSS, 2017). Collaboration between government and community organisations is viewed as critical (Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, 2011).

Community organisations are part of the fabric of communities and are frequently the first responders to disasters (ACOSS, 2020, VCOSS, 2017). They are recognised as trusted local service providers, holders of local knowledge about people, history, risks and vulnerabilities and able to connect with and mobilise community capacity (AIDR, 2018, ACOSS, 2020). Community organisations are place orientated and can draw upon their vast networks and expertise to best understand community needs and respond (Drennan and Morrissey, 2019). Their local knowledge and connections facilitates the mobilisation of community capacity (Drennan and Morrissey, 2019).

The role of community organisations in disaster management is acknowledged in policy. The Australian National Strategy for Disaster Resilience states that non-government organisations and volunteers are:

At the forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia. It is to them that Australia often turns for support or advice and the dedicated work of these agencies and organisations is critical to helping communities to cope with, and recover from, a disaster (Council of Australian Governments, 2011; p. 5).

In 2013, the Australian Senate, Environment and Communications Reference Committee recognised the value in involving community organisations in emergency management, stating:

The committee commends community sector organisations for their significant contributions during and after extreme weather events. It is the committee's view that the important role of community sector organisations in assisting communities and individuals during times of natural disaster should be recognised and supported. The committee urges authorities to give due regard to community sector organisations in both planning responses to and responding to extreme weather events, in particular those organisations that provide vital services to vulnerable groups.

Specifically regarding community recovery, the Australian Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook states (AIDR, 2018):



A range of non-government organisations, including community and social service organisations as well as not-for-profit and local community groups, faith organisations and service clubs are also integral to effective recovery. They contribute to initial and longer-term recovery activities, development of policy and practice, and particularly in the provision of a range of services for affected communities (e.g. Victorian Council of Social Service, Rotary, Lions, community/ neighbourhood houses) (p. 6)

Community organisations are effective in raising the resilience of disadvantaged communities (Mallon et al., 2013). They provide avenues for community participation in disaster management (Cretney, 2016), community development (Drennan and Morrissey, 2019) and local leadership of disaster recovery (Owen, 2018, Cretney, 2016). Community organisations may arise directly after a disaster to meet specific un-meet needs (Drennan and Morrissey, 2019).

The degree to which community organisations are involved in emergency management arrangements is variable. Well established national organisations are well prepared and have global operations that may assist to bolster domestic capabilities. (Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, 2011). These organisations have a history of responding to disasters and have systems for the rapid mobilization of their resources. Their roles and responsibilities are detailed in jurisdictional emergency management plans. However, smaller locally-based community sector organisations and service clubs are not generally well-integrated despite the capabilities they offer and previous experiences in assisting communities through crisis (ACOSS, 2014, Drennan and Morrissey, 2019, Redshaw et al., 2017, Deloitte, 2016).

Despite the lack of integration, the impacts of disasters on communities typically increase the demand for everyday services provided by some community organisations, resulting in community organisation involvement (Mallon et al., 2013). For example, in the Blue Mountains, despite not understanding emergency management arrangements and being unprepared, staff of Neighbourhood Centres responded to assist vulnerable community members following the 2013 bushfires. It was not until their involvement that local emergency services started to value and acknowledge the capabilities that they offered (Ingham and Redshaw, 2017). Similarly, the Dungog Shire Community Centre, following severe flooding in 2015, provided significant community support without connection to the Local Emergency Management Committee (Deloitte, 2016). The lack of connection demonstrates a lost opportunity to build resilience prior to disaster and readily leverage the capacity of community organisations in response and recovery.

The importance of the ability of community organisations to connect with vulnerable people was highlighted by a conclusion of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission that 40% of bushfire victims were considered to be vulnerable to bushfire due to age, ill-health or a combination of both (Teague et al., 2010). Individuals experiencing disadvantage are more susceptible than the general community to the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events (Mallon et al., 2013).

When collaborating, the objectives of government and community organisations may not always align. Community organisations may not follow the



same processes as government, but reduced red tape may also allow them to respond more rapidly to community needs (Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, 2011). Collaboration can also be challenged by a lack of pre-existing relationships and differences between organisational cultures, values and capabilities. Emergency managers may need to adopt more open collaborative styles of leadership to best engage (Victoria Inspector-General Emergency Management, 2017).

Evaluations of community organisation involvement are rare, though those that exist provide significant benefit:

- Redshaw et al. (2017) showed that partnerships between local neighbourhood centres and local government in the Blue Mountains to engage communities in bushfire preparedness were successful.
- The involvement of community organisations in conjunction with local government to assist residents following the Tathra bushfires (NSW) in 2018 was deemed effective (Risk Frontiers, 2019).
- Social recovery following the Pinery Fire (NSW) was benefited by the involvement of NGOs and community support groups (UTS, 2018).
- Involvement of the local neighbourhood house in the aftermath of the Tasmanian, 2013 bushfires was key to the resilience of the communities of Dunalley and Nubeena (Tasmanian Government, 2013).

The effectiveness of community organisations can be undermined by disruption as a result of disasters (Drennan and Morrissey, 2019). Locally-based community organisations are highly vulnerable and not well prepared for disasters and, when disrupted, can have significant negative impacts on the most vulnerable in society (Mallon et al., 2013, Drennan and Morrissey, 2019). A large number, though, have not previously experienced disasters in their local area (Mallon et al., 2013) and, given the lack of a recognised role, disaster preparedness has been overlooked (ACOSS, 2020).

Other factors that may reduce the capacity of community organisations to contribute include limited funding and staffing (Ingham and Redshaw, 2017, Drennan and Morrissey, 2019), lack of funding flexibility (ACOSS, 2020), lack of flexibility in organisational constitutions (Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, 2011) and limited integration in formal emergency management structures (Drennan and Morrissey, 2019). Even the largest of community organisations were said to have been strained by the 2009 recovery efforts, especially when compounded by large disasters in 2010/11 (Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, 2011). Organisations typically rely on community donations and, when overwhelmed, require government funding (Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, 2011).



METHODS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The key objective of this research is to identify how the resources of community organisations could be utilised to assist communities in the context of a catastrophic disaster in Australia across the phases of preparedness, response and recovery.

Key research questions include:

- What do community organisations perceive their role in emergency management?
- How do community organisations define the role of other sectors?
- What are the primary motivators for involvement?
- How have businesses, community organisations and governments worked together before in disaster management?
- How is collaboration between sectors best encouraged?
- What are the barriers, enablers and risks to further collaboration?

The project received ethics approval by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval No 5201926957416).

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews with senior stakeholders from community organisations were performed. Interviews covered:

- Nature of their organisation.
- Role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.
- Previous experiences.
- Motivations for involvement.
- Perceptions of the roles of business, government and other community organisations.
- Experiences of collaborating with businesses, government and other community organisations.
- Involvement in government led emergency planning.
- Internal disaster management preparations.
- Appetite to be further involved in disaster management.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and were conducted via telephone. Interviews lasted for around one hour. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to assist with analysis to identify key themes.

Twenty-seven interviews were undertaken with twenty-six different organisations. Organisations were recruited based on their previous involvement in disaster



management activities. Tables 1 and 2 provide an outline of the organisations involved in the interviews.

Thematic analysis was undertaken utilising a deductive approach. A coding framework was established based around emerging themes identified through an initial review of the transcripts and the interview guide. Coding included roles before, during and after disasters, perceived roles of other organisations; motivations for involvement; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks; collaboration and areas for improvement.

TABLE 1: TYPE OF ORGANISATION

Type of organisation	Number of respondents
Faith based	8
Humanitarian	5
Community Centre	2
Community group	2
Advocacy	2
Veterans group	1
Research	1
Resilience/ engagement	1
Community broadcaster	1
Wildlife rescue	1

TABLE 2: ORGANISATION SIZE

No. of employees and volunteers	Number of respondents
≤10	5
11-100	3
101-1000	3
1001-100000	9
>100000	6

ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was undertaken targeting not-for-profits and the community service organisations during the second half of 2019. The purpose of the survey was to collect quantitative data to support interview responses.

The survey questionnaire was designed in consultation with representatives of the community sector and was distributed nationally through peak membership organisations including VCOSS and Linkwest. Individual service providers were



also encouraged to promote the survey. The survey was also distributed through LinkedIn and Twitter. In total some 181 organisations responded to the survey.

Respondent's profile

Respondents represented a wide variety of service providers, with the most frequent services provided including health services; information, advice and referral and family and relationship. The types of services provided by respondents is summarised in Table 3.

TABLE 3: PROFILE OF ORGANISATIONS

Type of service	Number of respondents
Health services	66
Information, advice and referral	57
Family and relationship	54
Disaster aid	46
Disability support	40
Migrant, refugee and asylum seeker support	32
Aged care services	29
Youth services	28
Advocacy	28
Housing and homelessness	28
Legal services	20
Community development	15
Mental health services	6
Other	49

Respondents were recorded from all jurisdictions apart from Tasmania and the Northern Territory. The breakdown of respondents by jurisdiction is shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: LOCATION OF ORGANISATION

State	Number of respondents
NSW	32
QLD	11
ACT	1
VIC	70
WA	43
NT	0
SA	5



National	8
Not Stated	11

The majority of respondents were smaller organisations that employed fewer than 20 staff on a full-time equivalent basis and/ or had fewer than 20 volunteers. The breakdown of respondents by organisation size shown in Tables 5 and 6.

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES

Number of full-time equivalent employees	Number of respondents
None	30
1 - 5	54
6 - 20	13
21 - 100	39
101 - 1000	26
> 1000	14
Not stated	5

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS

Number of volunteers	Number of respondents
None	20
1 - 5	20
6 - 20	50
21 - 100	48
101 - 1000	23
> 1000	13
Not stated	7

Most organisations had been in operation for more than 20 years, demonstrating their long-held connections with communities. The length of respondent's operation in years is provided in Table 7.

TABLE 7: YEARS OF OPERATION

Years of operation	Number of respondents
0-1 years	2
2-5 years	14
6-10 years	11
11-20 years	18
>20 years	128
Unsure	4
Not stated	4



The majority of organisations operated within wider networks beyond the local community where they were based, reflecting an ability to share resources and knowledge. The number of respondents reporting to be part of wider networks is provided in Table 8.

TABLE 8: NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS OPERATING WITHIN DIFFERENT SIZED NETWORKS

Network	Number of respondents
International	20
National	31
State	48
Regional	43
Local	27
Not stated	12

Respondents received funding from multiple sources. Most frequent funding sources included government grants, community donations and government service contracts (Table 9).

TABLE 9 ORGANISATION FUNDING SOURCES

Funding source	Number of respondents
Community donations	78
Corporate sponsorship/ grants	53
Philanthropic donations/ grants	60
Government grants	105
Government service contracts	75
Membership fees	48
Other	45

Respondents were from a variety of levels within organisations, although most often from senior management roles. The breakdown of respondents by their organisational role is provided in Table 10.

TABLE 10: RESPONDENT ROLE

Respondent role	Number of respondents
CEO/ Managing Director	37
Senior Manager	44
Team Leader	24
Team Member	28
Other	42



INTERVIEW RESULTS

ROLES AND INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Community organisations perform a diversity of roles before, during and after disasters. Some organisations cover all phases whilst others specialise in a specific domain.

Before disasters

Respondents thought that the community organisations sector has a role to play before disasters though not all are engaged. Roles undertaken before disasters relating to preparedness include engaging communities to build disaster awareness and preparedness, advocacy to promote resilience and research to enhance disaster management. The sector has a specific focus on engaging with the most vulnerable people.

Respondents thought their involvement was essential as they are the trusted people on the ground in communities. Their roles require an understanding of communities and connections with them, as well as an ability to allow communities to participate in preparedness programs. They are an important conduit of information between stakeholders assisting communities to understand relevant messages. Respondents said:

We are the trusted organisations on the ground. If government comes and tells people that they ought to be more self-reliant because no-one's going to come and help evacuate them, this is not a message that goes down very well. But if it's supported by the community sector... "Come on guys, we need to do this." It's a message that is reluctantly accepted.

I think the role of the community sector is really to know the community. So, in that community, they need to know what's going on, where are the vulnerable people.... once a disaster hits, when those organisations know the vulnerable people and what's going on, then they can respond better as well.

One to hear what's going on and how to help support and connect the dots between the different entities. Sometimes information coming from different parties, it may not necessarily be served in a way that they can disseminate. The community can't cope with that because of the whole range of different messaging happening from different parties. It's to help them share different information that's credible, relevant and appropriate. But also, I guess, trying to bring those conversations together so that they, you know, can identify those that need help and how to help to support those needs.

Often extensive pre-existing service networks are utilised to engage with vulnerable individuals. Such networks arise due to service provider-client relationships or organisational structures such as faith-based organisations that are inclusive of churches, schools and other extensive networks. Organisations also deliver engagement programs in collaboration with emergency services



and other community organisations. In some instances, community organisations are involved in research collaborations to improve engagement with vulnerable communities. For example:

So actually, going to churches, because we partner with a lot of churches and informing them about disasters that might happen or how it actually looks like so just how to prepare them for the chances but also within the community that they get more aware of things like, you know, preparing your house, do you have a bushfire plan, all those kinds of things. Here in the states, we work with RFS and SES together, so we try to get that information back into the community and into the schools through the volunteers who are there. Pretty much kind of a teaching and educational component of that.

Respondents saw themselves as key links between government and the community and saw a need for a collaborative and coordinated approach to engage communities. They thought their organisations were key to informing government about community needs. For example:

I think the ability to have government, NGOs and business to be able to collaborate together, that's the most effective outcome.

I think it should be done better to work with other organisations. It's all about communication. Because you know, I've seen it in lots of different communities that there's little community groups and they all do their own thing. But if we could all work together and inform and train the community and educate the community I think that could be done much, much better.

Respondents did not nominate a role in communicating risk information to communities. Perhaps reflecting the imbalance of knowledge between government organisations and the community.

Examples of the sector's involvement before disasters include:

Example - Large Well Established NFP taking leadership in building resilience

An organisation made a deliberate shift from a recovery focus to that of providing services to better prepare people for disasters. It has developed a series of programs focused on raising household awareness and preparedness through providing guidance on how to develop a home emergency plan. The programs take an all-hazards focus and are designed to be complementary to engagement programs of government agencies. This was a deliberate approach to capture a gap in the market, as other programs tended to be hazard-specific and to provide more human-centred messaging such as how to look after children during disasters. At inception, there was some push back by traditional emergency services, but today the program enjoys wide acceptance and is delivered in partnership with government and other community organisations. Delivery mechanisms include websites and applications as well as community workshops, culminating in a preparedness campaign held prior to the Australian summer each year. The organisation is also involved in advocating improved disaster risk reduction strategies through a collaboration with large Australian businesses.



Example - Large NFP providing food to the vulnerable

An organisation is involved in a pilot program with emergency services and a University to build disaster preparedness amongst vulnerable community members. The program involves the organisation's members having conversations with their clients on disaster preparedness to encourage household emergency planning. The organisation's CEO described the approach:

We're using a system where the volunteers will actually talk to the clients over a five-week period and just prompt them into taking some action around their homes to make them safer. That might be about "Have you seen the Disaster Ready Kit Plan? Here: I'll leave you a copy" but on the visit we may say "Here's your disaster plan. Have you done anything about it? Would you like someone to come in and put it together with you?" ... So basically the initial conversation is that when we go into someone's home, maybe a new client for example, we will just do a little bit of a risk assessment as far as broken footpaths or unsteady stairs or something... The next step in this plan would be doing the assessment as to whether they can actually test the fire alarm in the house to see whether it is working or not. If it's not working we refer them onto the fire brigade. If it is working we just ensure they know about it. We find out about their families. Are they aware of emergencies in this area? Or disasters – have they been through a disaster? Then we give them the Disaster Ready Kit

Example – Small niche NFP focused solely on disaster preparedness

A small niche NFP with a global affiliation started up in Australia some ten years ago following a significant series of bushfires, cyclones and floods with a sole focus on disaster resilience and climate change adaption. Their focus is to develop partnerships to enable joined-up facilitation and engagement to support community participation. Specific tools have been developed to assist communities to understand historical natural disasters and the future impacts of climate change. For example:

So, you're able to search through a suburb history of the last 150 years of weather data and disasters in the QLD region, for example, and contextualise back into your suburb. So that's put out a historical link, to greater understand the disaster timeline and where the events in those suburbs... what we've done is actually brought together the data of BOM, of the Insurance Council and layered them together so you can actually understand what's actually happened at a suburb level, because in the past, that hasn't actually been brought together. And the preparedness piece takes you through understanding the context of your house and then building up the preparedness plan and showing the things you can do to prepare and retrofit to your home. And prepare them, preparing your family and your community. And takes you through a series of steps to show how you can do that.



Example – Small town neighbourhood centre

Through working to assist their community during disaster, the neighbourhood centre came to the realisation of the importance of building disaster preparedness and resilience within their community. The centre manager said:

I suppose I had that sort of “light bulb” moment just kind of going “Hang on – I work with the most vulnerable people every day and support them, and resource them and connect them for all sorts of vulnerabilities within their daily lives through food shortage and homelessness, domestic violence and all those sorts of daily issues that they may face, yet the one thing that literally kills clients but also was the most devastating impact in their lives was the one thing that I had never thought of connecting with them around or having a conversation with them about actually being prepared for that sort of event.”

Their focus has now become connecting community members to their community, including the strengths and supports that exist, and building their own resilience. Such an approach builds upon the core services already delivered by the neighbourhood centre.

In a subsequent smaller disaster, the effectiveness of the neighbourhood centre's efforts were demonstrated through individuals being more proactive and connecting throughout the community. The centre manager said:

The people in the streets and the community were far more connected and aware that they had a role in their own knowledge and empowering themselves with what they might need as opposed to everyone historically sitting and waiting for the SES to knock on their door and tell them what to do. Yes – the people who spoke to me said that “You would have loved it. We did everything you said we should.”

Example – regional collaboration of neighbourhood centres

Following devastating bushfires, a community collaboration between neighbourhood centres, community organisations, Department of Education, emergency services, local government and a university was born to form a local resilience committee. The collaboration delivers community engagement programs including the organisation of an annual conference on building in bushfire prone areas. The network manager said:

We have a whole plethora of events that are run in partnership between, say the RFS and the neighbourhood centre or the local primary school or whatever, to bring that to the community – not stuff that is already in the brigade shed, but to have a family fun day or bbq where the emergency services are there to answer questions and hand out resources. There are clinics targeting young parents at home alone with small children or people with disabilities, deaf community - that sort of thing.

Motivation for involvement

Motivations for involvement primarily related to gaps being identified through previous disaster experiences that community organisations were capable of filling; or that there were synergies with the mission of community organisations,



particularly those that aimed to serve communities or support vulnerable community members. Respondents said:

We really need to raise awareness amongst the community that disaster experience is, it's just going to change lives. People really underestimate what it does. And it would be great to have, say, the leadership on something like Disaster Awareness Day.

Identifying that there is a gap and understanding it and serving up information to people in a context that they can take on board and understand it. So, we've tried to do things that serve up credible science-based and good information in a way that helps people to take on board and then process and then do something about that.

We have access to a cohort in the community that emergency services may not. That's not to say they don't, but they may not. I believe it's our fundamental responsibility to ensure that that community is aware of emergency management broadly.

Perception of the role of government and business before disasters

Government

Respondents believed that the role of government was to provide leadership including coordination and prioritisation, understanding communities, providing information on risks and how to prepare, providing opportunities for communities to be involved and tailor their own approaches and being forward looking and strategic in its approach. Respondents said:

I think government have the responsibility to provide information on risk analysis, appropriate behaviours and the options for people to plan for but, within that, also provide opportunity for community to nuance that stuff. Rather than having that as a cookie cutter where, here's the plan, go and initiate the plan – when lets actually look at the nuance of that particular community and even down to that particular family.

I feel like they should take the lead and feed their expertise in terms of knowing the risk and the consequences of a disaster and how that can impact their communities.

The role of government is to really try and initiate preparedness in the fact that – I believe in health promotion. It's about not reacting but being proactive and putting more funds into the preparedness of people.

Leadership expectations have been created as respondents have observed the resources that government has available and the legislative accountability. This also includes an expectation of government collaboration with community organisations and that funding should be available to support disaster resilience programs delivered by community organisations. Many believe that governments must invest further in disaster mitigation and preparedness due to the known benefits to reduce disaster losses and minimise community harm. There is also a role for government to work with businesses to ensure business resilience.



Government was criticised for being shortsighted and inwardly-focused, with respondents believing that, in some cases, they did not have a strong understanding of communities and that communities may lack trust in government. For example:

I suppose, people in government do not have connections with the grass-roots of any community. They're not trusted. The "I'm from government and I'm here to help you" line usually gets a laugh but they don't know where to go to talk to people.

It was also acknowledged that government has a leadership role in building and strengthening emergency management capability. This includes ensuring that appropriate disaster management frameworks are in place, including legislation, to provide the appropriate authorising environment, mobilisation of resources across the whole of community and maintaining disaster preparedness. For example:

I think, first of all, making sure that legislation and regulation is in place that provides protections for people to act in response to disasters - that they have the protections of the law in doing that. I think the second thing is having a framework in place for effective mobilisation of both government and community and private sector resources when, and if, disasters occur – whether they be floods or rain disasters; whether they be fire disasters or whether they be outbreaks of major issues such as poisonings or the potential for something like foot and mouth – any of those kinds of transferable diseases. Then also the third part of that is making sure there is strong communication and preparedness so that people know their roles, their responsibilities and opportunities when disasters kick in. It's not just about government having its own preparedness for its own staff, it's also about making sure that the community is able to be activated and engaged and have some ownership of the decision-making or information input as well as the government agencies who have responsibility.

Business

Respondents believed that business had a strong role in preparing for its own resilience to ensure that the risk of disruption was minimised given the economic importance of businesses and the essential services that they provide. A possible extension of this role would be for businesses to pre-plan what support they could provide to communities prior to disasters. Respondents said:

Absolutely – particularly small business, because if small businesses fold and you know that after an event you're always going to have some businesses that close.

If it's a private enterprise involved in critical infrastructure then they absolutely have an obligation to disaster preparedness. Every business has its own responsibility to be prepared for, to be resilient for dealing with catastrophic events. Most of them are not because it's just an inconvenience, it's not a high priority and it's not, there's nothing that compelled it to be a high priority.



It was acknowledged that business presently does not have a well-defined role in supporting communities to be better prepared, although some thought there was a role in particular to support community organisations in their engagement activities through funding and greater collaboration. Examples of such collaboration were identified as a large insurance company assisting a large community organisation to promote household disaster resilience planning, and a local partnership between a neighbourhood centre and local real estate agent to engage with new residents about disaster risks.

During disasters

Only a few respondents indicated that their organisations were involved in assisting communities and emergency services during the response phase of a disaster. Of those organisations involved, nominated roles included assistance at evacuation centres, registration of disaster victims, provision of emergency communications, assistance in identifying vulnerable people, emergency catering and dissemination of emergency warnings. The degree that the sector could be further involved during the response phase was questioned on the basis that community organisations do not have legislated disaster management roles and hence do not have powers to undertake many emergency functions. They also lack the required training and equipment.

Examples of the sector's involvement includes:

Example – A large community organisation providing disaster victim registration and evacuation support

A large national community organisation provides a disaster victim registration system nationally. The system is funded by states and territories. The system enables people to register at an evacuation centre or online before they leave their house. People can then go online or call an 1800 phone number to find out about the wellbeing of family members. The community organisation also manages evacuation centres in several jurisdictions and provides psychological first aid in evacuation centres across Australia in partnership with state and local governments.

Example - A community organisation with state-wide coverage supporting the identification of vulnerable people

One NFP is developing a new program to assist emergency services identify vulnerable people during the response phase of a disaster. The CEO said:

So if there is a disaster then our services can be contacted or we can contact the emergency services and say "Look: these particular clients may need help" or "they are in that area... it's flooding."

Example - A community radio station acting as an emergency broadcaster

A community radio station is registered as an emergency broadcaster to provide emergency warnings and information to the community during disasters. This involves receiving broadcasting of warnings received from incident management centres. A senior volunteer said:

We basically broadcast messages depending on their urgency on a regular basis. If you do get a disaster of some description, we'll talk and



set up regular time slots with the controller that's in control to distribute messages out to the community.

Example - A national service club providing emergency catering

Many groups including faith-based and community service clubs reported providing emergency catering to emergency services and those impacted by disasters. One respondent said:

We had a club out cooking meals for emergency volunteers. At one stage one of our clubs in Townsville was leading the push and they were providing for emergency services. They were providing breakfast for up to 250, lunches for 750 and dinners for 250 and they did that for 13 consecutive days in the time straight.

Motivation for involvement

Motivations for involvement were again the identification of a perceived need or gap and connection to an organisation's mission. One respondent mentioned the need to fulfill donor and community expectations and another described the need to respond when their skills and experience could make a difference. Respondents said:

People didn't think they were getting enough information about emergency situations

The community expectation. The donor expectation. We get a lot of donations and one of the things people expect is that, when disasters happen, they'll be out there doing something. It's also driven by community need in a sense that we can bring a humanitarian focus to a lot of what's happening during, before and after disasters.

Perception of the role of government and business during disasters

Government

Respondents believed that the role of government during the response phase was to provide leadership and coordination, enabling collaboration between different organisations, provision of emergency warnings and information to communities and management of evacuations and ensuring the provision of essential services. There was a perception that state level emergency services were most involved as 'first responders' as opposed to local and national levels of government. Respondents said:

It's really where the uniform stuff comes to the fore and most of that is funded and owned or driven by government agencies. And government, again, very much a driver of a lot of the services but this is where I think it flips from when you're in the response side of it: you often have the uniform people need to come in and take over and tell people what to do because it's about life and death.

First of all is to have very good communications, so they have to know who to talk to and how to talk to them. The second role is that, when there is a disaster, you need to be able to tell people what to do and where to go.



They can get people to places and safety, you know, school halls, cyclone shelters, those sort of things, easily and very quickly.

Certainly the role of government is to obviously manage and direct responses to the disaster events; but I think the challenge we have is for the community to understand that they can play a fundamental role as a part of that rather than seem to be reliant on it.

Business

Again, respondents believed foremost that the role of business was to ensure its own business resilience and to keep their employees safe. Respondents said:

They were so key in our response and recovery. First of all they need business continuity plans because you need that economic drive. Straight away you need to have businesses continue. Very much they need to have a continuity plan and, small communities like ours, they are mum and dad businesses.

Largely protecting business, I think. Mainly about saving lives of people in the businesses but then it's a matter of (for instance in flooding or some other sort of low-level disaster) how to save plant and how to save stock in a very proactive sort of a way during that.

In some cases, it was identified that businesses would provide direct emergency service responses in support of local communities. For example, a large mining company has an arrangement to provide emergency response support in communities surrounding the mine. Businesses also had a role in supporting their staff to volunteer for emergency services.

Other respondents were somewhat unsure of what role businesses could take, with some also stating that the role depended upon the type and size of business involved. Views were expressed that business capabilities might be more relevant before or after disasters. For example:

I think that their roles are more relevant in preparedness and recovery as opposed to response. Response requires coordinated professional integration and utilisation of resources and capabilities, other than on a very local level with businesses being willing to support the efforts of disaster response efforts and things like that.

There was an acknowledged need for the role of businesses in disaster response to be further defined, although in a free market economy it is difficult to mandate their role.

After disasters

There was strong recognition of the value of the roles that are being performed by community organisations, often with little funding, and that community recovery would be deeply challenged without their involvement.

Roles and capabilities referred to by respondents to assist communities after disasters were incredibly diverse. Roles nominated included provision of mental health and wellbeing support (psychological first aid, pastoral care), outreach, emergency catering, assistance in recovery centres, financial counselling, food



donations, material aid, impact assessment, advocacy, dissemination of recovery information, recovery leadership, provision of financial support, provision of temporary accommodation, management of spontaneous volunteers, service referrals, organisation of public appeals, clean-up and reconstruction. Often community organisations focused on providing specific services rather than a large diversity of services. This specialisation was said to result in a coordinated and networked approach with organisations working in collaboration with one another.

For some respondents, the role of their organisation is unclear despite their involvement in disaster recovery and further clarification would assist them. For example:

I think our organisation is committed to assisting with natural disasters but its actual role at the moment is unclear and I think that is something that we would really like to clarify and, I think, would be interested in developing so that there is a more formal process, particularly when natural disasters happen quickly and people need to be mobilised and things need to happen. If that process is already documented and in place, it can happen more quickly.

Given that emergency management arrangements are different in each jurisdiction, the roles that national community organisations provide differ between jurisdictions as well as their funding arrangements. A need was seen for organisations to develop relationships and arrangements with different jurisdictions including, in some cases, different individual local governments. For example:

Organisations like [large NFPs] have provided different things in different states depending on local partnership arrangements and responsibilities.

Navigating those different state networks is very laborious, confusing and inefficient.

In many cases the sector continues to perform its typical business-as-usual functions but within a disaster recovery context, which means that the demands and challenges facing its service provision change as communities gravitate to their existing service providers. This also sees the sector utilising its existing diverse networks across the community, government and other service providers to perform its roles. For example:

You may not want them and you may not be ready for them but there's hundreds of people who turn up on your doorstep because you're the local place they know. They will be there so it probably makes sense to make plans to deal with that because it will happen... Our role was basically to amplify one of my normal roles which is to encourage collaboration and utilise existing networks. To utilise the networks that we had and build on those and bring other relevant people to the table to deal with specific issues.

Neighbourhood centres have a really big role to play and they were very significant in the Northern Rivers area. We talk about Dungog. They were big there. In the Northern Rivers area they were very important, particularly



in immediate recovery because that's where their client group is most vulnerable and they saw a big surge in usage.

I don't think their role really changes that much. If their role is to support people who are homeless, in a disaster it's understanding how that's going to impact their service and preparing for that and knowing that.

Respondents commonly raised the connections of their organisation with vulnerable people who were their existing clients. For example:

I think the sector has a big role to play because they are the ones who have the ears and trust of the most vulnerable in our sector and they know where they are. The normal run-of-the-mill approach to our preparedness and response are not going to get into those sectors.

Examples of the community organisation's involvement included:

Example – A new emerging disaster focused NFP coordinating spontaneous volunteers

A newly formed NFP has built a capability to assist in the coordination of spontaneous volunteers. A senior leader of the organisation said:

We're now finding that governments are coming to us and seeking advice on response and spontaneous volunteer management is a big focus across government in Australia right now — particularly in the recovery space; managing that 'mud army'. For a variety of reasons, we think we have the ability to bring a sort of best-in-class service with that. We were just in Townsville after the flooding up there and we managed over 400 spontaneous volunteers while we were there, in conjunction with volunteers in QLD.

Example - A national service club providing material aid and financial support

A large national service club assisted after the Townsville floods to coordinate material aid and financial support to the worst affected households. The local disaster coordinator said:

The impacted household may have received some government grants but they don't have sufficient to replace all of their items, we then go in, check their immediate needs, check their bona-fides and then we may be able to help them with payment of funds to secure that new item they need, or it might be school clothes or helping with school fees or things of that nature.

Example - A state based NFP providing food donations and material aid

A state based NFP whose day to day business is to provide food to struggling community members supported the immediate recovery after the Tathra bushfires and Lismore floods by providing food and material aid. The State Director said:

The most recent two was the Tathra bushfires just on 12 months ago: probably within 24 hours of those fires we had a B double truck going out of here down to Tathra with food and those sorts of things. We then used our networks: one of the schools, the kids lost everything – all their



stationary, their backpacks and lunch boxes and those sorts of things. The part in it that we had the following week: we took down pretty much everything those kids needed to get into school, so backpacks, lunch boxes, drink bottles, stationary, everything down there. The Lismore floods a couple of years ago: we shipped a B double truck and a semi probably within the first 48 hours, again to provide food and relief to the charities that we work with within those regions for distribution to people that need it.

Example - A community centre that provided leadership in relief and recovery

A community organisation in a small town provided immediate leadership within its community to coordinate initial relief efforts and later to take a key leadership role in the recovery process. The example demonstrated the first responder role community organisations undertake in the aftermath of a disaster. The manager of the community organisation said:

The whole community was isolated for four days, the roads were washed out, we had no phones or data or electricity. In the void of anything else happening within the community, the community centre started supporting and working with our community the way we normally do anyway. That sort of evolved into working coordinating other agencies and services within the community to develop support programs and structures such as food banks and clothing pools and coordinating the volunteers. So we started that sort of spontaneous volunteer management. We also started providing resources and support to the community and then that evolved slowly into receiving our funding for nine months to provide the case management and, I suppose, manage that human recovery element for the community.

Example - A faith-based organisation providing pastoral care

A faith-based organisation has provided pastoral support to communities impacted by disasters. The program was built on an existing service providing pastoral support to rural communities and was able to utilise the trust and networks that it had already built in communities:

We do deploy chaplains to evacuation centres when there are evacuations. We have chaplains here available to other settings – like when people go back to their homes during the very early phase of recovery – to the point where there is a transition between the two phases to support them as they are seeing flood damage or their houses are burnt down or so on. At Tathra, the chaplains were on buses that went through the damaged areas with the residents when they weren't allowed, yet, to see their houses. One of our key roles is to lower the level of stress for people – to be a calming presence – to be able to listen.

Example - A large national NFP providing psychosocial support

A large national NFP provides assistance through outreach programs to connect with impacted individuals and provide psychosocial support in partnership with government. The organisation is involved in running community appeals to provide funding to assist disaster-affected communities. It also assists wider community development to support recovery. For example:



As well as that we also provide, in a basic psych first aid via outreach visits out in the communities ... usually in the immediate aftermath we're working, again, with the state government to get out and do a bit of a sweep of the community and connecting with people and see where they're at. The other thing we do that is, sort of, bordering response/recovery is, in the bigger events, we will often consider running public appeals where we collect money for direct distribution to support people who've lost houses, lost family members etc ... We will, again in the medium to larger-scale events, often employ recovery officers. They basically do community development type work or community development roles in affected communities for a period of anywhere from 12 months to several years depending on what we reckon the need is in the community and what funding we can drum up to enable it. Those roles – working closely with community groups, with local governments, with state governments to really put on events, to do referrals of people, occasionally we do a little bit of case management for people who've been affected (not that often). Also, the other piece that we do across all realms, but particularly on the recovery side, is provide advice and expertise based on experience both within Australia and internationally.

Example - A NFP providing referral services

Many community organisations reported providing referral services to link clients with other service providers. A community organisation described this as:

one of the things with recovery for our clients is the mental health. That's where our volunteers come in. If they feel that a client's distressed or not coping then they report that back to the service manager who may action it depending on the case notes of the client. Disaster recovery is, for us, more of a referral process to ensure that the client's wellbeing is maintained. We are not skilled as mental health workers so it is about that referral process.

Motivation for involvement

Motivation for involvement is similar to performing roles before and during disasters. Respondents typically reported that their organisation's mission was strongly aligned with supporting communities. For example:

Honestly, I think the motivation is from a community perspective. I think, as a large organisation, they see an obligation there to support.

Perception of the role of government and business during disasters

Government

Respondents believed that the role of government was to provide leadership, coordinate across the whole community, establish recovery frameworks, enable and encourage collaboration between different organisations, engage and communicate with communities, leverage local capabilities and support local communities with resources, funding, priority setting and specialist expertise. Respondents said:



I think the role of government is about bringing the community together to say actually "What are the things that we hold as the greatest value? What are the catastrophe resources, skills and abilities and materials that we actually have at a local level that we could leverage if and when something like this happens?" But I also think it's a role of local government to start to really engage with the football club and let them know that they actually potentially have a role to play, in not only responding and recovering, but in preparedness.

I think, besides obviously the funding, it's there to encourage the various players to come together – to help facilitate that engagement in that space. I think you do need to have government involved more broadly because then it doesn't matter about location or hazard because they have that general knowledge about all the problem broadly.

And a coordination role simply because that you know, someone needs to take the lead on what's occurred and how to manage the eventuality so taking a lead and managing the process.

A critical role for the government to be able to come in and have some quick action in terms of being able to support money flow to help with the cost of recovery. The next thing is actually, again, on the ground – having coordination and/ or the resources to actually help with the initial fix-up. I think there's two more things I'd add to that. I think one of them is around communication, both out to the community and across agencies that are engaged in the disaster recovery so that there is clear and transparent understanding of who is responsible; what is available; and who is there.

Respondents thought that local government had a strong role to play in disaster recovery supported by other levels of government as they have a strong understanding of communities and local connections. For example:

In recovery, responsibility shifts to local government. Whereas local government might mainly be about bins and kerbs and things, suddenly they find themselves chairing recovery committees.

Despite local government being the closest level of government, respondents thought that community organisations were often closer to communities as they are part of the community fabric. One respondent said:

Because councils are not the lowest level of community. They're not. They're still quite structured and they don't have that... They're not CWA. They're not the local football club. But they have connections to it.

There was an expectation that government would be immediately responsive to the needs of communities, but also reflective on learning lessons and making improvements for future disasters. Respondents said:

I'm trying to think of the word. It's almost the emergency activations that allow for quicker responsiveness rather than having to go through a process of approvals. Setting up the right environment for decisions to be made and to be authorised and then to be actioned quickly.

... but there's also a responsibility to learn from what happens during a disaster and so that there is this concept of preparedness, or change, or



setting things up to help to learn from what's happened, how it happened and why it happened and look at, not only people resourcing, but programmes that might actually be put in place to prepare for any other future disasters.

Despite the expectation of being responsive, government agencies were criticised for being slow and bureaucratic. A respondent said:

I think that there's potentially a lag because the government isn't as agile as a lot of other organisations, whether that be private or not-for profit they do have government processes to follow to be open and transparent and everyone can be understanding for what they're spending taxpayers money on.

Business

Many respondents believed that businesses had a significant role to play and could offer significant value, whilst some others were unsure. Some had already observed businesses taking a role in disaster recovery, whilst others had not. Insurers were singled out as having a significant role that could make or break communities in their recovery. For example:

Often businesses are impacted themselves so it's hard to expect them to have a role other than their own recovery. Big organisations and ones that are able to support often do.

Respondents thought that the role of business was again to ensure their own business resilience. In addition, businesses could provide support to impacted communities, including through providing support to community organisations, but only if they had been resilient to withstand the impacts of the disaster. For example:

... it's that as soon as they can get back up and functioning, the better it is for the community. That's a really important aspect from the economics of the place. Also, some of the activities that businesses offer are part of what helps the community bond – like it might be a place that they go to, like a community hall.

Businesses were seen as being agile and innovative and not being constrained by the bureaucracy of government. The support that businesses could offer was seen as diverse, including varying service delivery; donating goods, equipment or services; corporate volunteering and donating money. Business capabilities and available support was observed as differing based on the type and size of a business.

Respondents viewed that businesses had a social responsibility to be involved. Businesses that did provide support were recognised as good corporate citizens. One respondent said:

Business have a major role to play as well. If they are good corporate citizens they will be doing their best to help out wherever they can. Whether we're talking about the days immediately after or three or four months down the track. I think there's a social responsibility on business to be part of all of this and, depending on their specific role. I guess making themselves available for extended periods of time to leave their own



customers for a period and go and help as part of the larger coordinated effort is something that business could be part of and probably is part of.

Respondents thought that local businesses in particular often provided large contributions but that community organisations often provided more. One respondent said:

I think where the disaster is, local business generally tend to dig deep, but beyond those areas, my sense of it is it really falls down to the local volunteer organisations, the local charities and a lot more from the NGO sector.

COLLABORATION

Respondents were clear in thinking that all sectors had a role to play across disaster management, supporting a whole-of-community approach, but that implementing such collaboration was complex. For example:

It's an all-in approach. It's business, it's tourism, it's transport, it's infrastructure, it's individual community, it's sporting clubs, it's faith communities. It has to be all in. But I have to say that reaching into all of those spaces is complex and not everyone has an appetite for it. So, we might have an appetite for it but the local footy club might go, 'No we're right mate, we just play footy on the weekend, leave us alone.'

Collaboration between community organisations

Collaboration occurs routinely between different community organisations with strong trust expressed between different organisations. Often, community organisations were said to share similar values and objectives.

There were examples of organisations of different sizes working together: for example, large national community organisations collaborating together to manage evacuation centres and material aid, larger community organisations supporting local community organisations to deliver aid and local community organisations working together to run workshops and recovery programs. Often collaboration involved coordinating activities, sharing information and leveraging each other's networks with the community. Such collaborations often also involved local government and businesses. Examples of collaboration included:

First of all from the service provider's perspective [X service club] and [Y service club] do work closely together. We have a similar ethos and that is to help and assist others. There have been occasions when we have been working side by side with them. Whether that's been the hands-on cleaning out of mud and things like that after floods in that immediate recovery phase...

We partner as much as we can with specialist organisations like the [X NFP] or community recovery and government so that we can think about preparedness and training and resources for communities – particularly those that are in exposed areas that are regularly hit by disasters or have the potential to be hit by a disaster. So things like that.



It was expressed that local community organisations often have extensive relationships at local levels, including with neighbourhood houses, community centres, service clubs, community groups, sporting clubs and faith-based organisations. These relationships are particularly strong given the regular communication and collaboration between the different groups. For many, collaboration is essential to their day to day operations. However, pre-existing relationships were not always essential for collaboration where a shared need and purpose existed. Respondents said:

It's very much a conversation in a small community – so I know Des personally from [Y Club] and I know Kim from [Z Club] so it's a lot easier at that little local level.

In some instances, collaboration arrangements between community organisations were being formalised through Memorandums of Understanding. For example:

We have an agreement now with local organisations that we could help manage the volunteers that we would, under certain circumstances, set up food banks and clothing pools. We have the volunteer resourcing to be able to do that. We have agreements with hall usage and those sorts of things with the Baptist Church and those sorts of groups ... we've now sat down and just done up some basic MOUs with those groups. We just review them now annually to make sure, because obviously their memberships change and our board changes, so we just go through it to make sure that is something that we still have the capacity or ability to do and it's something that we still want to partner with. It's not a really formal thing.

Although there is strong trust, there can be competition between organisations often seeking recognition for their efforts. Respondents said:

At times you get some level of, not turf wars, but you get the idea of that there are a few groups working in the same space and they like to keep their name up front.

I think sadly, it's a bit of a competition of who can be one of the first on the ground, have their banner or their sign up first. I think a bit less of ego and a bit less pride and a bit more commitment to cause would go a long way for some people.

Collaboration with Government

Collaboration between the sector and government has been strong and there is acknowledgement that government is trying to do more to engage the sector. Some larger community organisations have specific Memorandums of Understanding with government organisations to establish their role, expectations and relevant funding arrangements. Such Memorandums were either broad, covering their entire service provision relationship, or were specific to their disaster management role. Arrangements relating to the Disaster Welfare Services Functional Area in NSW were often highlighted as an effective model of formalised collaboration.



It was evident that community organisations big and small largely have trust in government, particularly at local levels, although this trust can be tested when government promises are not delivered. For example:

I do because I just fundamentally believe that people should be working together for the good of the community.

It was acknowledged, though, that collaboration may be limited due to constraints on behalf of government and that there is often a political dimension when working with government. One respondent said:

The whole concept of things being community driven is always a bit of a challenge because you balance that with political interests and media interests and people are looking for a scapegoat if something doesn't go right. It is complex. In all my time in this I think it is largely a political exercise as much as anything.

A barrier for government to collaborate with the sector may be that government officials must navigate a complex sector of different organisations with different structures and relationships with government. However, saying that, in many cases organisations already have pre-existing ties to government through their service funding.

A further barrier was perceived as the lack of true appreciation of what community-led recovery means and hence the lack of appreciation of the role of the sector in community led recovery. For example:

I don't think there's enough appreciation for individual communities to truly have a voice about what that is for them. I think we're too busy trying to come up with a formal structure. I get that structures can be adaptable. I don't know how much adaptability is given to the process of allowing communities to really lead in their own recovery.

Respondents were clear that it was not always necessary for them to work with government as they were independent and could make their own decisions. In at least one case, an organisation tried to avoid collaborating with government to avoid red tape and bureaucracy, preferring to collaborate with community-based organisations and businesses.

Only some organisations are involved in government-led emergency management planning and exercises despite the appetite to do so. Examples of how organisations are involved included:

We worked alongside the other community partners in preparation for interagency exercises related to evacuation centres, for instance. [X NFP], for instance, coordinates those on behalf of the disaster welfare services and we try to coordinate our training so that chaplains that are even fairly newly trained, but also those that have been around for a while, are able to attend a mock evacuation; practise working with people in various scenarios – so that's an ongoing thing all the time.

I'm part of the State Welfare Services Committee where we work closely together with government agencies and yes, we definitely trust. We are involved with them in a little bit of a different way with our Aged Care



services and the emergency management plan, you know, how to evacuate and all that stuff.

The district human and social recovery groups usually meet a couple of times a year. One of the main things they do leading into the season is just run a sort of desktop exercise where they'll get all the agencies in the region that are represented in a room and they just run a couple of scenarios that could possibly occur in their regions and run kind of "This is stage one – how would you respond? How would you respond?" "Stage two – we've now moved into the flooding has come up. What would your agencies be doing in this period?" It is that kind of desktop scenario stuff. We've been involved in a number of those across the state.

Even when involved in government led planning and policy initiatives, some thought they had been somewhat of an afterthought being engaged only late in the process.

Collaboration with Business

Some community organisations have previously collaborated with business sector and there is trust in businesses. Some relationships of which were long standing. Collaboration included businesses providing funding support for service provision to disaster affected communities. Respondents said:

How we work with business is that they often resource us in terms of finances. It does go beyond that as well. [Supermarket XY], for example, is our corporate sponsor and they have been really great beyond the financial giving that they do to resource us.

In terms of collaborating with business to support us, to provide donations to support our responses, there's absolutely agencies that get involved. We're involved in a number of agencies like [xyz] and other big businesses.

In other instances, instead of donating cash businesses collaborated by donating products or provision of in-kind support such as allowing their employees to volunteer with community organisations. For example,

We were in a community that ran out of water and they got a truck straight away and gave us bottles of water. They use what they can to help the community so they've been really helpful – being flexible and being supportive of what we do.

In the case of large community organisations, collaborations were often formalised through partnership or sponsorship arrangements with large Australian and international companies. Community organisations reported that often relationships were pre-existing but that, during disasters, they could be approached by other businesses wanting to partner. Support provided was said to be dependent on the scale of an event, with big business more likely to support during larger disasters. A respondent said:

We certainly get a lot of support from businesses, particularly when bigger stuff happens, we'll have trucks queuing up outside the door wanting to donate things and we'll have corporates on the line wanting to see how they can help out and all that sort of stuff. From that point of view, it's very



strong... So, we have a number of standing corporate partners in all sorts of areas of the business who, if and when something – and this is usually driven by the scale of the disaster too. In the bigger stuff you'll invariably have conversations with bigger corporate supporters about funding support to things like our recovery work. It may be donations. Invariably they want to donate money to support people.

Many collaborations were wider than disaster management and operated in a business-as-usual context. Community organisations were then able to leverage these arrangements to support their disaster management activities. At local levels it was thought that local level community organisations had constant relationships with local businesses given their roles within the community.

Most collaboration related to disaster recovery, although a few collaborations were occurring in the context of building community preparedness and resilience. For example:

So we worked really extensively with real estate agents around preparedness. They share our little plan that we've got. They share our resources. They, now, connect certain farm owners. They suggest that they contact the local RFS and give them their phone number so they can do a fire plan and get assessments done of their properties. Those sorts of things, because they know everyone that's new to the area. We also work with vets because vets are a really great way to get people to do a plan for their pets. If they have a plan for their pets, then they will be safe themselves – the chances are greater. So vets are really good for encouraging people to have a disaster plan for their pets. They have that conversation, so that's something we don't have to do. We work with the Chamber of Commerce around sharing any messaging. They've got that great database of all the local businesses. I think we could probably have more conversations and work more collaboratively instead of us saying "Can you share our resource?" and then they do, we could actually start to ... But, again, it's time-poor and this is not necessarily a priority for anyone now because we don't have a disaster and we don't have one looming.

Though most believed that businesses were involved in supporting communities through times of disaster for the benefit of communities, some were sceptical that involvement was being driven more by marketing opportunities. There was also acknowledgment that, like all organisations, businesses only had finite capacity. Community organisations were also conscious of a business partners brand so as to protect their reputation.

Respondents thought that further resourcing would assist their organisations to proactively build locally-based collaborations with businesses. One respondent thought business needed greater recognition for the role that it already played during disasters. Collaboration could also be improved by raising the profile of community organisations and their role in disaster management and the community generally.

There were also examples raised of community organisations directly supporting businesses: for example, chaplains from a faith-based organisation providing pastoral support to small business owners.



STRENGTHS, BARRIERS, OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Strengths

Respondents were able to identify many strengths of the sector, reflecting the enormous value provided. Strengths nominated included:

- Strong networks be they within local communities or across broader regions, to enable reach and support. Organisations were often referred to as being part of the community, referring to their connectedness and the essential services that they provide. Often services are being provided to existing clients. For example:

I think it's definitely for a community connection because we're working with those agencies and those people all year 'round ... So we know that we're already working with the agencies.

I think it gives the emergency management space the ability to actually get the message quite quickly to those that need the messaging and the understanding and the services because we are so connected to so many people on a daily basis within the community.

- National or state-wide community organisations, which can support local service provision through the allocation of resources outside the impacted region. For example:

We have the church. We have the flying padre. Everywhere you go in Queensland we have someone in that region. For us, and our agency, we're very confident in this community recovery team's ability to leverage off of its resources. We have a lot of capacity and a lot of opportunity. I think that's yet to be explored and how that could be better utilised in a disaster response.

We can bring in volunteers from interstate, provided the government is prepared to cover the cost. For example, just recently in Townsville I think we sent up about 80 volunteers from NSW.

- International community organisations, which have international networks and capacity that can be drawn upon, some of which have experience in managing truly catastrophic events. For example:

I guess our international presence. We're not just one single organisation on our own. We're backed up by different offices around the world – regional offices, headquarters – with staff that have very strong experience in different emergencies.

- Strong knowledge of local communities. Community organisations are made up of individuals that are from local communities enabling them to understand community needs. For example:

It's intelligence to start with, it's being able to provide that broader intelligence to how particular communities think, what they know and don't know about emergency and emergency management more broadly.



- Being able to provide links between government and communities to either provide information and services to communities or to provide feedback from communities and to advocate on their behalf. For example:

We also take that information and feed it back up so that the emergency management space is a bit more aware of where the community is actually at.

- Pre-existing relationships with vulnerable people and specialist capabilities and expertise to provide diverse services to meet their needs. For example:

Old people living on their own. Knowing where they are is important because they might be in their house with the air conditioner going and there's a fire and they don't even know about it. Having someone on the ground that can just so I'll drop in on Mrs. Capultz and just see how she is going just to update things.

Have skills that matter during disasters - I mean, we have emergency relief. We have a Centrelink agency. We've got counsellors. We've got staff. We have so many programs and activities that are actually not specifically recovery, or emergency management or disaster focussed, but actually play a really vital role in supporting people broadly. Our daily programs are quite adaptable to a disaster emergency management or recovery space.

- The ability to ensure social inclusion in disaster management given the diversity of organisations and their connections. For example:

Our programs are responding to the needs of women and girls, people with disabilities, lesbians, gays, transsexual communities and making sure that people who are otherwise socially vulnerable are not excluded.

- Being strongly trusted by communities, possibly more so than government and business. For example:

A lot of people are comfortable dealing with an organisation like us versus a Department of Human Services out of government as an example.

It's a trusted brand. We've been doing it for a long time.

We're local, credible information, the people that are broadcasting are generally known to the community.

- A depth of previous experience in disaster management. For example:

Fortunately, in Townsville we have very skilled people who have been through a lot of disasters, in fact, my predecessor to the role that I currently have is Chair of the Disaster Committee based in Townsville, probably has 30 years' experience dealing with natural disasters, you know, that's a great asset to Townsville; and look, we can pull on those resources that share knowledge in the organisation at the moment.



- Having resources already within local communities so they can be deployed rapidly if they have not been disrupted, without relying on external help. In this sense community organisations often act as community first responders. For example:

I think the strength of involving our organisation is our connection to our churches, just because our churches are there all the time in those communities. Especially in disasters where roads are cut off, you can't access the towns and you are working with the groups that are already on the ground to strengthen their capacity.

We've already got the logistics. We've already got that connection into the rural community. The great thing for us is that its community- based. It's run by volunteers and we're getting the feedback from the agencies ... If you look at any emergency service or any provider, they fly into the town, set up – they've got no community connection.

- Flexibility to tailor services and solutions to local problems outside of the constraints of government bureaucracy. Community organisations are also independent so that they can address problems without the lead of other organisations if resources are available. For example:

I think we break the rules. Even though we're a big organisation we do have some flexibility so, for example, in recovery, our role is to fill in gaps for people who fall through the cracks of what, in the guidelines for a government grant, for example, they could be an LGA or a postcode that's on the border. They may still have been impacted by that flood or fire but, because of technicality or because of legislation, they might fall through the gap. Because we have our resources and funding we've got flexibility to support those people. We have a lot of experience in that we've often seen that response slow. We have the flexibility to focus our resources where required if a disaster has happened. We have experience with that. I think the other thing is our footprint within communities and having relationships in the community before the disaster.

- The membership of community organisations, in particular their volunteers, tends to be diverse such that a wide variety of different skills, professional backgrounds and experience is offered. For example:

We have a broad base of people. People from all kinds of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. People who speak other languages. No matter what the natural disaster is, I'm confident that we would have people that offer good solid skills that could make a difference.

- Others include:
 - The ability of organisations to be able to raise funds to support communities.
 - The ability to raise additional volunteers from within communities, including from within their own local



communities rather than relying on external assistance.

- Connections between different community organisations, enabling them to collaborate and share resources and knowledge.

Barriers

Organisations do suffer significant barriers to their involvement in disaster management. Overwhelming, the most nominated was the lack of funding to resource programs related to disaster management. Funding was an issue for almost all organisations regardless of their size, jurisdiction or structure. It was evident that funding available was often small and insufficient. Often, paid staff were volunteering their own time and volunteers were covering their own costs, indicating that successful responses were largely driven by goodwill and community spirit. Respondents said:

If there was a disaster – no, we don't have a lot of resources. We're underfunded as is. Our services work on a very limited budget, a very lean budget. They really rely on community spirit and community resources.

There were no resources. The only thing that was funded was the social-work position so I got there and we looked at the kitchen – could I set that up to consult? How would I get around? The first 24 hours I had a bike and then that got a flat tyre so I didn't even have a bike after 24 hours. So, I had to really draw on my inner resources and networking with people to try and work out how I would do this. Not only did I not have an office because we worked out the kitchen was not going to be suitable.

The main barriers are probably lack of funds. Take NW QLD, we don't have a massive volunteer base out there. Being small towns in small communities, and the distances are very large so we're relying on volunteers who are spending their own money to go out and help people in their area — this is happening at the moment. So, hundreds and even thousands of kilometres that people are driving at their own expense to go and help people out there.

More than anything, funding, money is just so important. It allows organisations to be agile and flexible. It allows organisations to work with communities and give people who are affected by disasters the opportunity to have dignity and choice in how they're responding, themselves, to disasters. It's unrestricted funding for emergencies is just the biggest barrier that we all face.

I think the most on-going barrier is just being able to fund what we do – keep it going. We get assistance for training but that's always – there are a lot of competing things in terms of financial.

That's not the lack of good will within emergency management organisations but it is the lack of political will I think – I'd have to say to be honest. Perfectly happy to spend several million dollars on a flash new appliance (and I'm not arguing that the emergency services don't need that) but there's no capacity to support the community sector in any of their roles in recovery or preparedness at the moment.



Even the fact the funding bodies don't appreciate the role that we can play, I think is a challenge. Particularly when you can't do normal business in some respects, even though you ramp up your normal business to accommodate and meet the needs that are presenting. We need greater understanding and acceptance within funding streams. There was no funding stream or bucket of money that we could access as an organisation to actually even cover ... I mean we were open seven days a week, 14 hours a day and we're only normally open 9am to 3pm four days a week and 9am to 1pm one day a week. I went from working three days a week to working seven days a week. There was no mechanism for us to connect with funding to cover the costs incurred in that response at all.

Issues regarding the flexibility of existing funding were also raised as an inhibitor. One respondent said:

We still don't have the capacity to draw from our government funding body. We don't have that capacity for extra funding or extra services.

Yes, but we're talking about government aren't we? All of the bureaucracy, and "you can't do it this way" and "you've got to say it this way".

Even when government funding does exist it can be inadequate and, given its typical short-term nature, results in uncertainty, limiting service planning by the organisations. The move by governments towards competitive funding processes also reduces the incentive for organisations to collaborate with one another and creates a risk that they will compete with one another which could undermine valuable relationships during times of disaster. Respondents said:

But our major constraint is money. We are down to having enough money up until the end of this financial year and then we don't know, if we can't get another grant that's probably about it after 10 years. So just not having resources is a real problem.

Funding and resources may be drained further in the future because of rising community expectations surrounding disaster responses and that severe impacts from weather events are becoming more common. One respondent said:

I think we're finding that disasters are happening more often. There's an expectation from communities as to what they'll receive in the way of support and that support does utilise a lot of our resources and funding. With the increase in disasters I guess there's always this issue of having enough funding to survive.

Other barriers nominated included:

- A perception that there is a lack of awareness regarding the capabilities offered by the sector to support disaster management and that the sector is not recognised as a player in disaster management. Lack of recognition can result in lost opportunities to attract funding to support disaster management programs. For example:

I also think that one of the barriers is, and this is a perception issue; that we don't just provide services to people of faith — we are a



faith-based organisation, I think that the nuance can get lost in translation... people might actually narrowly define us and therefore not consider us for all options.

For us and that is really a big issue and often our organisation's a little bit on the edge because it's not really seen well enough. You know our investors aren't always seen.

- A government-centric approach to emergency services that does not recognise the role and value of community organisations. This is said to result in lost opportunities that could arise through greater collaboration. Though some progress is being made, it was thought that some emergency services personnel tended to protect the status quo and that emergency services struggle to collaborate between themselves let alone others. For example:

I think what limits what we can do is recognition by government that we are part of disaster recovery process, in a formal sense. I think that just inhibits our ability to have more available when a disaster occurs.

We were not seen as partners by the emergency sector then. We were seen as, to be frank, do-gooding, tree-hugging, bleeding-heart liberals who came in and patted people on the shoulder and went "There, there" and handed them a hankie. There were some really serious barriers back then. I think it's fair to say that those have significantly diminished in the light of what we actually did on the ground.

I think that those things would benefit from a broader group of participants. Some of those policy discussions have tended to be secret government business and I think they need to be opened up. Things like the National Strategy for Resilience talked very much about emergency management being this partnership thing between community, business and government. I don't think we would actually play that out all the time.

As I said, I think there's a bit of 'government' and 'others' mentality in that varies from place to place. I think that is unfortunate because I think we're all in it together and all have something to offer.

Not recognising that having really good and trusted communication and sharing, that you actually get more done as a group than individually. We had experience where the government agencies – the actions that two government agencies have had – have acted counter and have been more negative than positive.

- A lack of clarity amongst community organisations regarding what their roles are. Some community organisations can be very large with diverse service streams of which disaster management can compete for attention. For example:



I actually think sometimes not-for-profits don't really know what their roles are generally. I know one thing that I struggle with is trying to actually get the whole of agency involved in disaster preparedness. Highlighting the fact that I think as one of the largest not-for-profits in the country, we have almost a moral obligation to be a lot more involved than we are... I think there's a lot of work to do internally in some of these larger not-for-profits to bring their own processes together and actually supporting the community a little bit more holistically, similar to what the government would do as well and looking for opportunities to partner.

- Challenges in maintaining a trained and ready volunteer workforce. Some organisations have an ageing volunteer base and there was an acknowledged need to attract the next generation of volunteers. It was also seen as being difficult to train local volunteers for roles that they only rarely perform. For example:

To assign the right sort of people to the tasks, you need younger, fitter, well-equipped people when the majority of our membership over here are a little bit older and a lot of them are retired, they've got the time to be giving up to this sort of volunteer work but they're not necessarily the best people to send into the front line.

Unfortunately, they don't grow on trees. I would say yes, it'd be great to have more volunteers.

- Local volunteers can often be impacted by a disaster and that may disrupt the capacity of local community organisation's service provision. For example:

One of the reasons we don't really work in first response is because our members mainly live in the communities; quite often they're the ones that are affected. That is why we are better at secondary response, so first of all we see how our members are placed and if we're able we can then go out in the communities.

- There are inhibitors to government sharing information about those impacted by disasters with community organisations due to privacy concerns.

Risks

Involvement in disaster management for community organisations is not without risk. Though some respondents were unsure of the risks their organisations faced, most were able to nominate risks that concerned them. These included:

- Stress and exhaustion of staff and volunteers working in stressful, traumatic situations, with little rest or support. For example:

I think we learnt the lesson after the first bushfire that we needed to manage fatigue a little bit better. You can't have the same couple of guys going out with the vets day after day after day. That's not sustainable. You have to rotate people through the



task. And I think you just have to be a little bit sensitive to the mental health of those people that stay on in that time scale.

The risk of burn-out of our service staff. They're underfunded as they are. They're doing extra hours and to have this on top of them. They would need to look at employing extra staff.

- Not being able to deliver upon community expectations. Comments included ensuring that staff and volunteers were skilled in the tasks being undertaken and that there was adequate capability to deliver. There was a perception that, on occasions, organisations jump into too quickly without appropriately skilled and qualified people or capacity. Not meeting expectations would have an impact upon reputation and possible future funding. However, exceeding expectations builds a positive reputation and standing in the community.
- Significant disruption to service continuity as a result of a disaster, resulting in the inability to provide services to the community. Few respondents said that their organisations had developed detailed formalised plans, procedures and training for their activities before, during and after disasters, although informal processes may be well-ingrained and practiced in organisations. It was viewed as critical that the sector considered its own business resilience in advance of disasters. Some respondents said:

Some of their business continuity plans are four years old and still in draft. They're quite immature in that sense and they don't shine a strong light onto business continuity and disaster preparedness. That's something that our team has been trying to encourage and look into.

I don't think there is an established process. I would like [X NFP] to establish some kind of policy or procedure that looks at offering a response.

Those organisations that had developed plans, procedures and structures stated:

We have very clear protocols in the way that we operate. We have training for team leaders on the ground right through to duty officers, logistics people. We've got protocols around deployment, discipline, relief, as well as stuff that we need to work out on the ground as things are rolling out. So definitely we have very clear processes in place.

We do a lot of work with volunteers so there's a lot of recruitment, training, engagement of volunteers, a lot of exercises that we might do with other agencies and government. There's also a lot of policies and procedures that we need to set up so that if something happens, we, as an organisation, can use our resources quickly and where required. There's a lot of preparation in that space as well.



Opportunities

Most respondents, though not all, said that their organisation would have an appetite to be more involved in disaster management. Reasons for their appetite to become more engaged varied but related to organisations having relevant skills and experience that could be leveraged or having perceived gaps in existing capabilities. Some were happy to be further involved but were mindful of potential additional resource demands and the need for further funding. Some responses were:

The appetite is always there.... We believe we have experience and expertise in being able to provide evidenced-based information and suit the arrangements that help in psycho-social recovery of communities and individuals.

Yes, the organisation itself has great appetite – because of the experience we had but also because we know we can play a key role in supporting our community.

Yes, we'd love to. I think it's really important. Especially around, not only the clients, but the firefighters or the disaster recovery emergency people. We would love to be seen as someone to go to for preparing good food. We've got production kitchens so if there is a fire or a flood that we can get those meals out to the community and the firefighters as well.

I think yes, we would like to be more involved but what does that actually mean, in what is the impact? How does that take away from the organisation and what we're doing? I'm not saying that this is potentially a bureaucratic system in what impact we have in making those changes, and what we would be looking to do in terms of securing funding and supporting the community.

Yes, over time, it's big. We believe that we can provide a large array of different services, advice and training to government and industry as a part of the larger disaster management infrastructure things. But again, we have to have the confidence that there's a way for us to be able to grow into that — we know we have the capability; we know we have the knowledge; we just need the organisational infrastructure to support the growth in those areas.

Yes. Looking to the future, the community has to be more engaged. There's going to be a great dependency on the community itself. If we're speaking about empowering community and community resilience, then I think it's a space in which we have a role to play. To engage with community and support as to how they look after themselves.

Well it would be good to be perhaps more involved, yes. But the size of our group and the age of our group would make more involvement difficult.

It was also thought that peak bodies representing community organisations could take a bigger role in supporting local organisations regarding disaster management and advocating on their behalf. For example:



We are still trying to get our state peak body to step more into the emergency management space.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION NEEDS

Respondents were consulted regarding what their needs were if they were to enhance their role in disaster management. Key needs raised were:

- A greater allocation of funding for use in disaster management. Some organisations see some existing relationships that government have with large organisations and want to see similar arrangements extended to cover them. Comparisons were made between funding arrangements for the sector against those for traditional emergency services such as the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the State Emergency Service (SES). It was noted that grants programs have been used successfully, but further funding is required to sustain initiatives. For example:

The biggest opportunity to really expand and enable organisations like us and Salvos and others is the funding arrangements. I look enviously at the amount of money that a CFA or an SES gets from government, and I don't begrudge them that, but I think (and I don't want to take their money) it would be nice if something similar were available to some of the community sector organisations for their work in emergencies specifically. We basically live off \$200 in this space. We don't get any government support in peace time.

Alternatively, the sector could be given more flexibility for existing funded programs to integrate elements of disaster management.

- Improved role clarity. One respondent said:

We're not told we have a role. If anyone had said to me that I had a role before the disaster, I would have thought you were barking up the wrong tree. I really would not have had an understanding because it's never been in our skilling. It's never been on the horizon. No-one's ever spoken to us about the vital role.

It was thought that government should support the sector to provide local leadership in assisting communities to identify needs and priorities and to solve local problems. For example:

Government should really supply the resources and then a bit of a hands-off approach and let the local communities identify what their priorities are and let them go ahead with a wisdom distance from the government.

- Greater acknowledgment by government of the role of the sector including via involvement and collaboration in government-led disaster planning committees, community engagement programs and in policy development. For example:

In terms of planning, particularly in terms of state government: more involvement, certainly, with local councils. Engagement, for instance, with the local emergency management committees. We don't have



a lot to do with that. It's pretty much accidental so that when we come to recovery we have to start from scratch with the local councils. That could be better.

Most definitely. I think that they should be forcing our peak bodies to come in as state and regional players within emergency management. I think we should sit at the table with other organisations and Government. I think we have a role to play.

Greater government coordination across the whole of community spectrum – I think government calling together the critical agencies and service providers with capacity to respond on a large scale, and actually, starting to map out what that might look like. And how that might work, how it would interact with government and those sorts of things. At the moment, it's very ad hoc.

It's really important that the community sector – more broadly, not-for-profits and others – are integrated and coordinated in that disaster management space.

- Greater visibility to other stakeholders of the work and capability of community organisations in disaster management, although it was acknowledged that there is growing recognition of the role of the sector. For example:

I'm not aware of a lot of other not-for-profits being involved in preparedness other than preparing their own capability to do stuff in and when it happens.

it's about knowing who's who and what's what. It's about knowing what capability and capacity they have. What their function is, so let's be specific around what is the function that you can provide, not what to do, but what is the function that you can provide today and what resources do you need to be able to do that.

I think there is a changing culture. I have found that Rural Fire Services and SES, particularly on the ground, are keen to engage. When we invite them along to our workshops – what we do is bring them along so that they can talk about their role and what their resources are to give that reality check to the community. They actually find that really valuable because it also helps them understand that community sector and the vulnerabilities of the client group of that sector.

I can see change in the last few, probably eight, years, where people would say, "You're not-for-profit. You shouldn't be working in the emergency services space" to, "Why weren't you here earlier to actually be here as part of the conversation?" I've seen a shift in RFS and SES where they go, "Hey, we'd like to buddy-up with you guys, particularly around your preparedness work" So, I think there has been a shift in the normal response agencies about what our role is. They no longer just see us as a good role making tea and scones.



It's about education so people understand more clearly what you're about. It's about practice as well. It's where people can see how chaplains work – not just the theory of it.

Respondents mentioned that measurement of the success of involvement by the sector across a range of initiatives is largely informal and that further effort is required to evaluate the success of the sector in disaster management to further demonstrate value.

- Proactive strengthening of trust and relationships to enhance collaboration. This was seen as the responsibility of not only the community groups (to co-organise) but also of government and businesses. It was acknowledged, though, that within the sector some community organisations can be protective of their role and wider 'patch'. For example:

I think our organisation has a lot to offer and will continue to have nothing more to offer as we grow and frankly we're busy as we can manage right now so I think for us right now it's about building trust, building relationships across the states, getting our brand recognised and as we develop that trust, we develop that trust we develop that financial base and that financial confidence.

They can become quite possessive about their role. "No-one can do this except us". I say "Well, we shouldn't be like that". There has been a slow change to more collaboration. I think in the past it was more like, "Oh, we'll use you to open up a door and then once we've got the door open we'll continue going our own merry way". I think that has changed. Not across the board but I think it is slowly changing. Where we work and function together we get better results if we actually work together.

- Opportunities to participate in training and skills development, including identification of opportunities for different community organisations to collaborate together in capability development initiatives. In some cases, respondents were not well aware of emergency management arrangements and how to connect. It was clear that training would need to be funded for organisations to be able to participate. A role was seen for community sector peak bodies to foster capability development. For example:

We need more strategic and ongoing training that we really need to have funded. And it's quite specialised training: obviously, we don't have a program where we do that frequently with volunteers and strategically to address that need.

Another part of what we're doing is to actually build community groups. So our approach now is to liaise with them and say, "Look, is there a way that we can train you and then if we don't have enough people that we might be able to call on you and you can come to an evacuation centre as well".

- To continue to invest in internal disaster readiness and business resilience programs.



ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

ROLES OF ORGANISATIONS IN DISASTERS

Preparation

A majority (61%) of respondents (n=107) believed that their organisations had a role in preparing for disasters, either internally or externally within their community. A breakdown of responses is provided in table 11.

TABLE 11: DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A ROLE IN PREPARING FOR DISASTERS?

Role in disaster preparation	Number of respondents
Yes	107
No	52
Unsure	14

The most frequent roles in preparing for disasters were community engagement to build resilience (n=30) and participation in emergency planning (n=22). Table 12 provides a breakdown of organisational roles in preparing for disasters.

TABLE 12: ROLE OF RESPONDENT'S ORGANISATION IN PREPARING FOR DISASTERS

Role of organisation in preparing for disasters	Number of respondents
Community engagement to build resilience	30
Participation in emergency planning	22
Capacity building	17
Community support	11
Business resilience	9
Supporting vulnerable people	9
Research	4
Maintaining facilities	4
Other	3

Some respondents provided a description of the work they had undertaken in preparing for disasters. These included:

Providing information and support for clients and the community before heat health season begins.

We partner with the local fire brigade to deliver community bushfire planning workshops, community-led disaster prep ... developed resource for our community: heat health information and support for community.



We convene the Resilience and Preparedness group which annually coordinates a calendar of 'Get Ready' activities/ events which are collaborations between emergency and community services. We also sit (as an invited guest) on the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC); and have a role in the pilot of the Community Resilience Network in the LGA.

We worked with Emergency Services and Shire in Development and distribution of the [xyz] Emergency Blueprint. We run Personal Emergency Planning days in conjunction with CFA and Red Cross and we look after the local hall which will be the local relief centre after an emergency.

We deliver public awareness campaigns around extreme weather (particularly bushfires) to provide preventative measures people with asthma can take to reduce the impact of extreme weather on their asthma management and to put asthma management front of mind.

Work in partnership with other NGOs, government and support agencies to design locally driven emergency preparedness and recovery strategies and actions and to build community resilience. These activities better enable the local community to reduce impacts and recover quicker following disastrous events.

Encouraging and resourcing family carers to consider how they will react in emergencies, including supporting anyone they care for who has special needs. Also, internal preparation, service contingency planning.

Working with clients to ensure they are prepared (aged, disability living in community, vulnerable people such as victims of family violence and insecure housing).

Preparing staff and systems to be prepared for emergency response; supporting clients; participating in municipal emergency management planning.

Most saw their organisation's role as a moral obligation (n=57), although some saw they had a legal obligation (n=23) or both a moral and a legal obligation (n=10). Some believed that they did not have an obligation but just assisted as it was of benefit to their community.

Most organisations (n=94) had previously assisted clients or communities to prepare for disasters, although 48 organisations stated that they had not and 17 others were unsure.

The most frequent reasons for becoming involved in assisting communities in disaster preparedness was that organisations saw it as being of benefit to their community (n=69), within the charter of their organisation (n=47) or that employees/ volunteers wanted to be involved (n=44). Fewer respondents believed their organisation's involvement was motivated by government policy or the need to build brand and reputation. The frequency of reasons for involvement in disaster preparedness are provided in Figure 1.

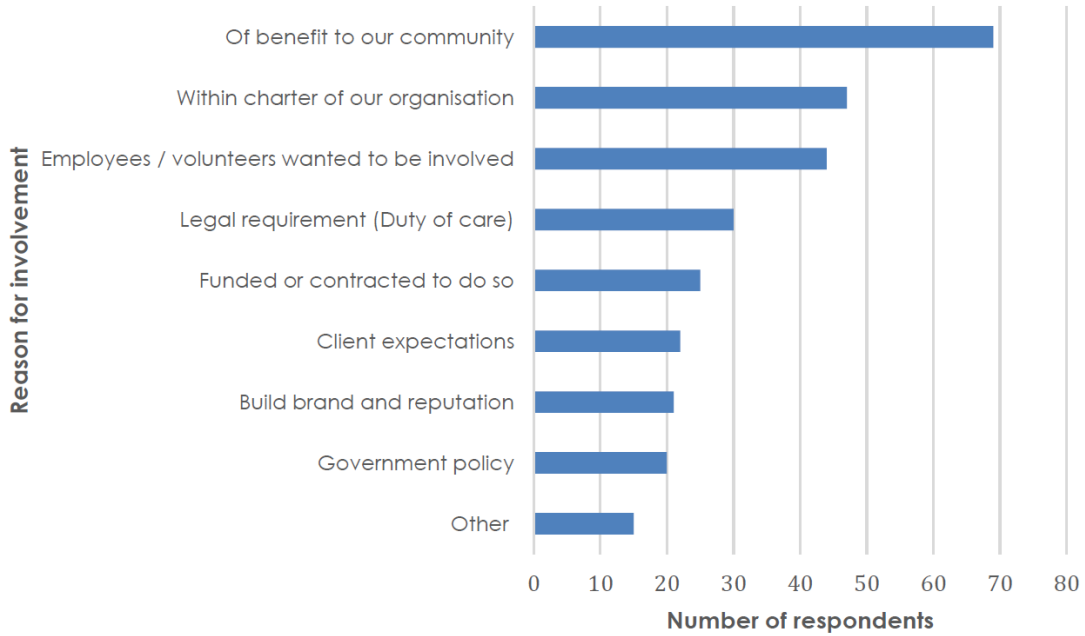


FIGURE 1: FREQUENCY OF REASONS FOR ASSISTING COMMUNITY IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Regarding their motivations, some respondents stated:

we just do it, it's our community ... what's with the obligation bit?

... small isolated rural township, we are a community hub with a capacity for information-sharing not dependent on internet access or written publication.

The Disaster Resilience and Preparedness Committee came out of the 2013 bushfires and continues because there is community benefit in doing the work.

Respondents believed that there were many strengths in their organisation assisting clients or communities to prepare for disasters. The most frequently-nominated strengths were access to local knowledge (n=78), understanding community needs (n=77), focus on people who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged (n=76) and community trust (n=73). The least-nominated strengths were access to global networks (n=19), access to funding and tools with an ability to deploy them (n=32) and access to a large pool of resources available for community needs (n=35). The frequency of nominated strengths is shown in Figure 2.

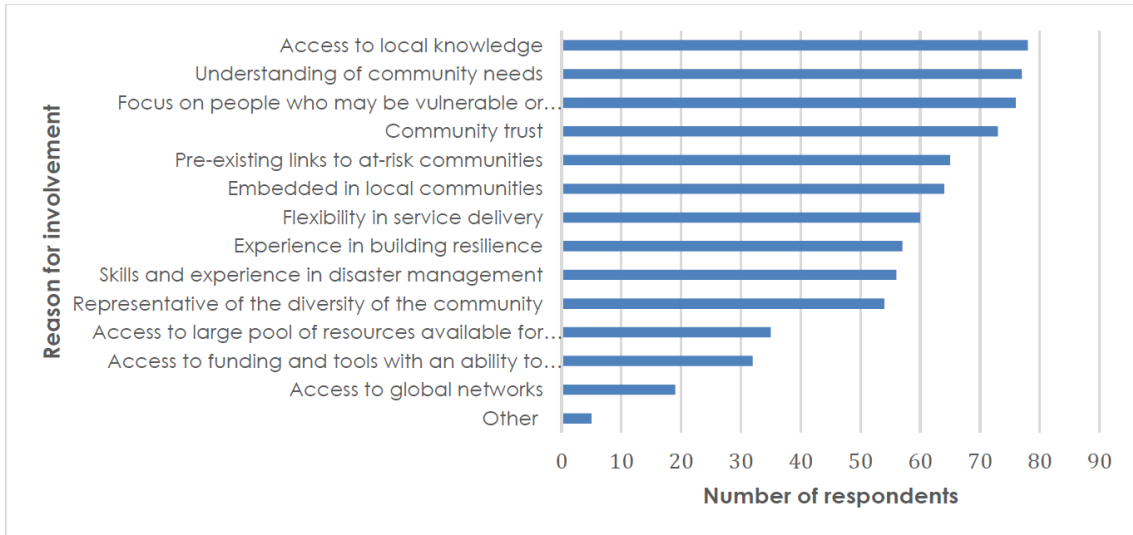


FIGURE 2: FREQUENCY OF NOMINATED STRENGTHS IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Barriers exist to organisations becoming involved in assisting clients or communities to prepare for disasters. The most frequently nominated barriers included lack of funding (n=65) and lack of capacity (n=46). Lack of relationships with government organisations and local councils (n=24) and a government-centric approach to emergency management (n=5) also represent significant themes (Figure 3).

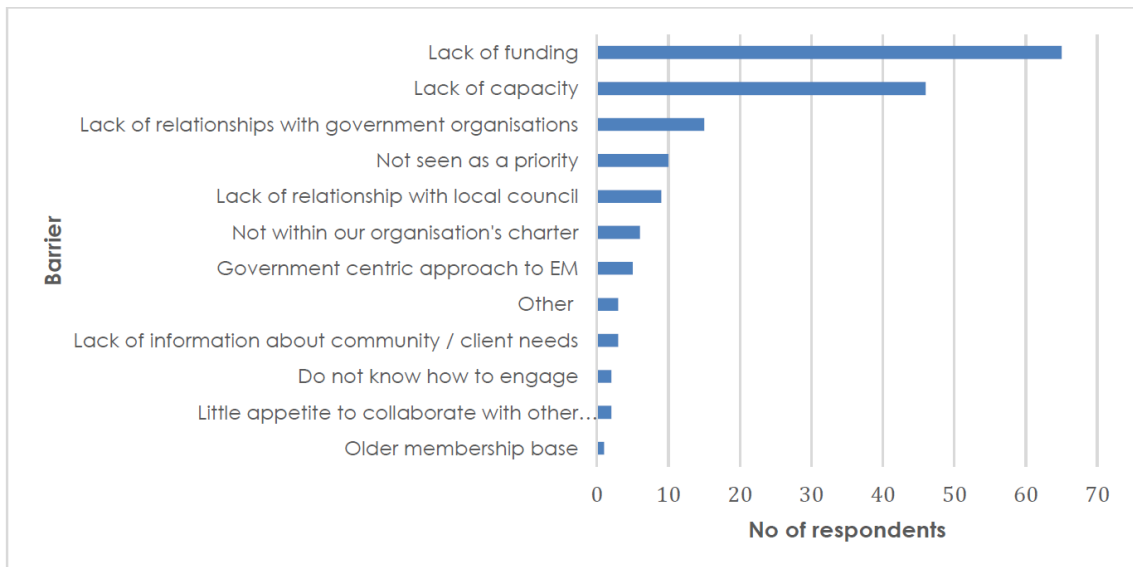


FIGURE 3: FREQUENCY OF NOMINATED BARRIERS TO ORGANISATIONS BECOMING INVOLVED IN ASSISTING CLIENTS OR COMMUNITIES TO PREPARE FOR DISASTERS

Response/Recovery

Most respondents (n=114) believed their organisation had a role in response to and/ or recovery following disasters, either internally or externally within their community. A breakdown of responses is provided in Table 13:



TABLE 13: "DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A ROLE IN RESPONSE AND/ OR RECOVERY FOR DISASTERS?"

Role in disaster response and/ or recovery	Number of respondents
Yes	114
No	37
Unsure	15
Not stated	15

Most saw their organisation's role in disaster response and/ or recovery as being a moral obligation (n=53) rather than a legal obligation (n=16). For some respondents, their organisation had both a legal and a moral obligation to be involved (n=19).

Roles performed by organisations varied. Most common roles stated were related to mental health and wellbeing (n=27), recovery support (n=20) and community engagement (n=19). Some organisations nominated numerous roles whilst others, only one. Table 14 summarises response and/ or recovery roles performed by organisations.

TABLE 14: TYPE OF ROLE IN RESPONSE AND/ OR RECOVERY FOR DISASTERS

Organisation role in response and/ or recovery	Number of respondents
Mental health and wellbeing	27
Recovery support	20
Community engagement	19
Referral services	9
Recovery Leadership	9
Emergency catering/ food relief	7
Evacuation centre management	7
Material Aid	7
Government liaison	6
Healthcare	6
Emergency response	6
Financial Counselling and Support	4
Supporting vulnerable people	4
Volunteer coordination	4
Community development	4
Emergency accommodation	3
Donations management	3
Impact assessment	3
Capacity building	2
Water resource management	1
Research	1
Warnings communication	1
Recovery Centre Management	1
Domestic and family violence support	1



Facilities provision	1
Legal support	1
Internet access	1
Transport	1
Family support	1

Some respondents provided a description of their role in response and/ or recovery:

Using social media (a Facebook group) to disseminate community information/ official updates from emergency services/ organisations. We are adaptable to needs of the community during recovery: however, we have low/ no resource, so we often help facilitate community to help themselves. We have recently created a volunteer register for people in [xxx Town]/ surrounds to put their contact details down for fire volunteering/ recovery efforts in the weeks and months to come. We will work with other organisations to share volunteer information.

We provide support through our free helpline to people with asthma whose asthma may have been impacted by disasters (e.g., smoke from bushfires). This is telephone education and support to assist them to manage their asthma. Through industry partners, we also support the distribution of ventolin to people with asthma if a state of emergency is declared which displaces people from their homes and therefore life-saving reliever medication.

We experienced floods in February 2017 which devastated the area. There were two deaths and lands were destroyed just prior to seeding. [xxxx Organisation] was integral in communication between land managers and government, coordinating emergency meetings and providing information about damages both on agriculture and environmental fronts.

We host a Disaster Response Network of trained psychologists who provide support to other personnel in the field.

Counselling support as requested from local government. Monitoring own registered clients who may have been affected by the disaster.

Responding to increased family violence incidents post-natural disasters and training emergency workers on how to recognise, respond and refer to family violence.

We are involved in evacuation centres, or in field work if requested by agencies. Part of our core business is helping people recover from trauma, so we also operate in long-term recovery.

Distribution of food relief and information following an emergency. Set up and manning of local relief centre.

Immediate, short- and long-term support for clients and community members impacted/ affected by the event. Support community led recovery efforts – material aid, spontaneous volunteers coordination,



support, case management and financial/ material aid to impacted/ affected community members.

We had many roles in recovery after the [xxx] Fires. We ran recovery meetings, organised recovery events, coordinated donations and ER and were part of the Shire Recovery Team and Redevelopment groups.

Many organisations have previously assisted clients or communities to respond to and/ or recover from a disaster (n=99), although this is not universal, with 32 organisations having not previously assisted in a disaster and further 20 being unsure if they had.

Organisations have previously performed a wide variety of roles, as shown in Figure 4. These have included mental health and wellbeing support, community engagement, material aid, financial counselling and support, emergency catering, recovery leadership, referral services, evacuation centre management, advocacy, recovery centre management, volunteer coordination, emergency accommodation, emergency response, clean-up, healthcare, legal assistance, government liaison, grant writing, fund raising, community development, family support, community transport, family and domestic violence support, research, accommodation for recovery centres and impact assessment. The most frequently nominated roles were mental health and wellbeing support, community engagement and material aid.

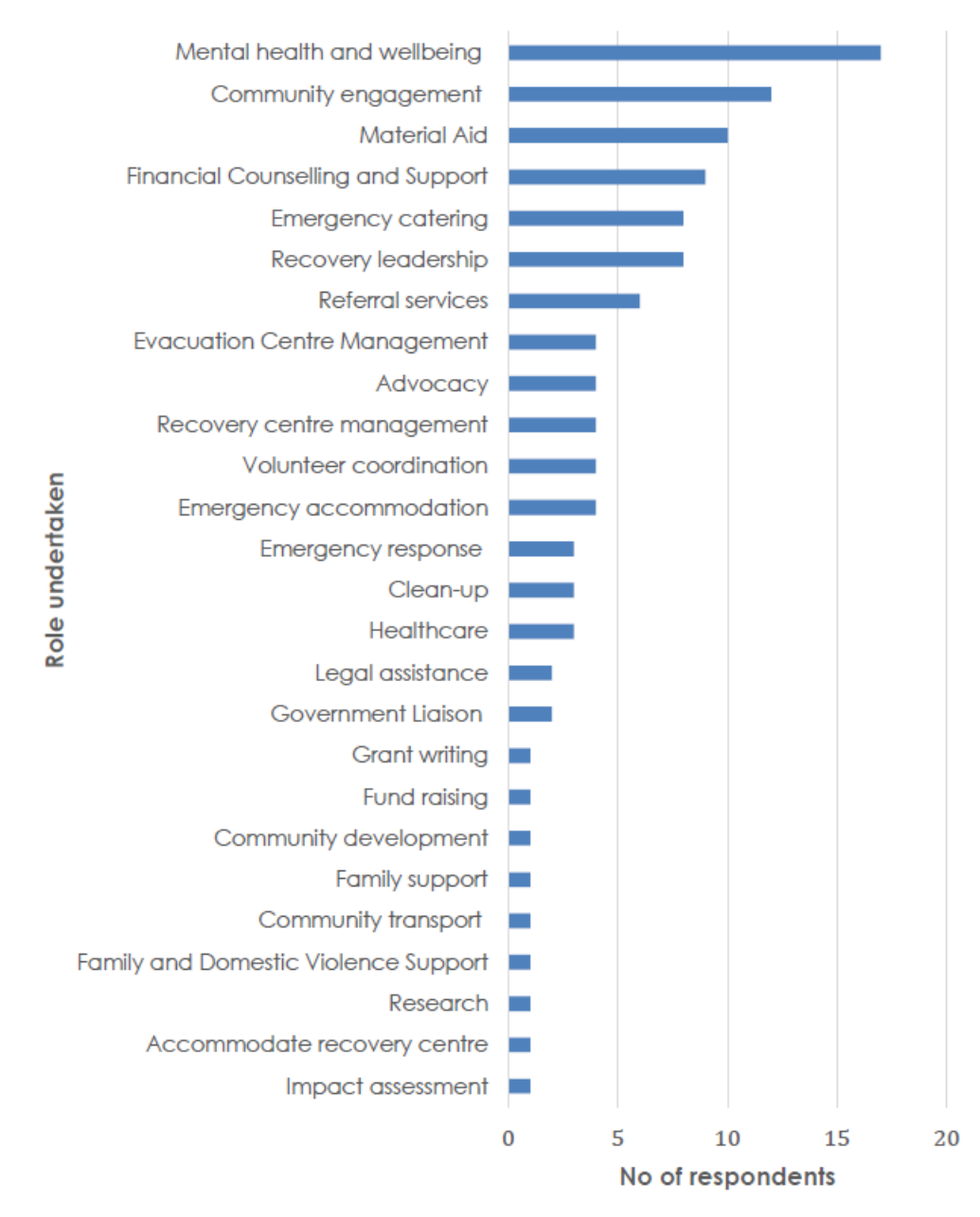


FIGURE 4: ROLE UNDERTAKEN TO SUPPORT RESPONSE AND/ OR RECOVERY IN PREVIOUS DISASTERS

Respondents gave numerous reasons for their involvement in response and/ or recovery (Figure 5). The most common reasons were that it was of benefit to their community (n=83) and to provide a critical service or good to enable community functioning (n=67).

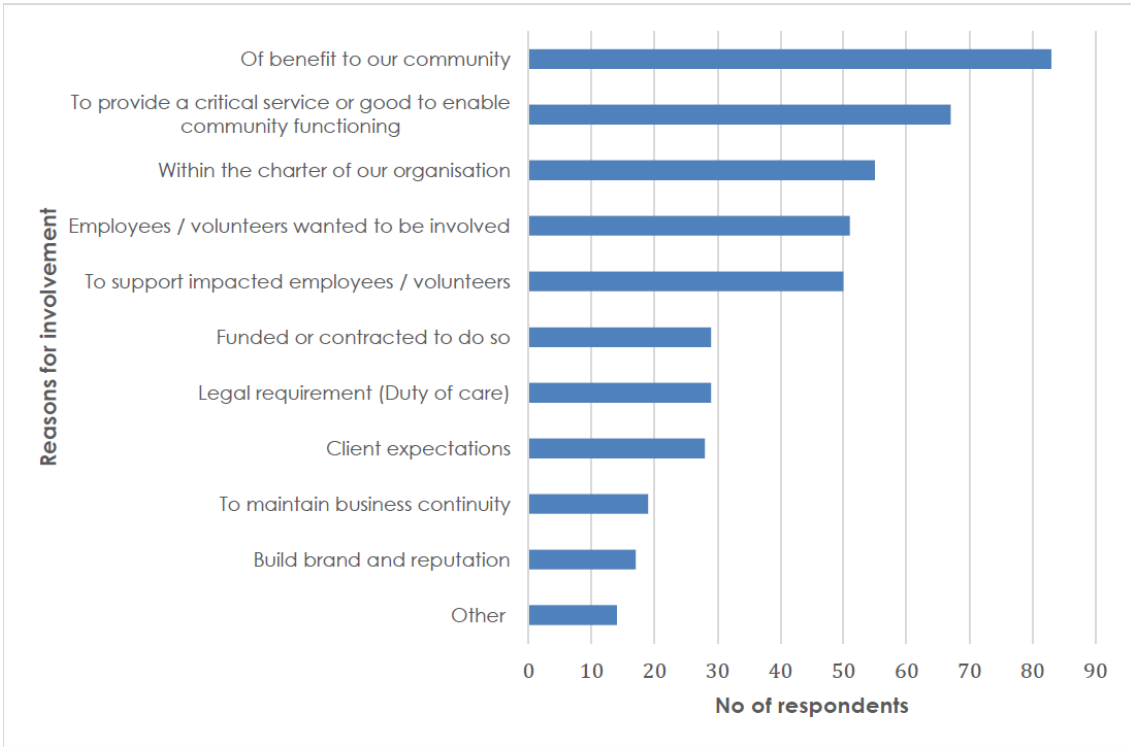


FIGURE 5: REASONS FOR INVOLVEMENT IN ASSISTING CLIENTS OR COMMUNITIES TO RESPOND AND/ OR RECOVER FROM A DISASTER

Respondents believed the key strengths of community organisations were their understanding of community needs; access to local knowledge, skills and experience; focus on people who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged and pre-existing links to at-risk communities. The least-nominated strengths were access to global networks, access to a large pool of resources available for community benefit and access to funding and tools with an ability to deploy them. Responses are shown in Figure 6.

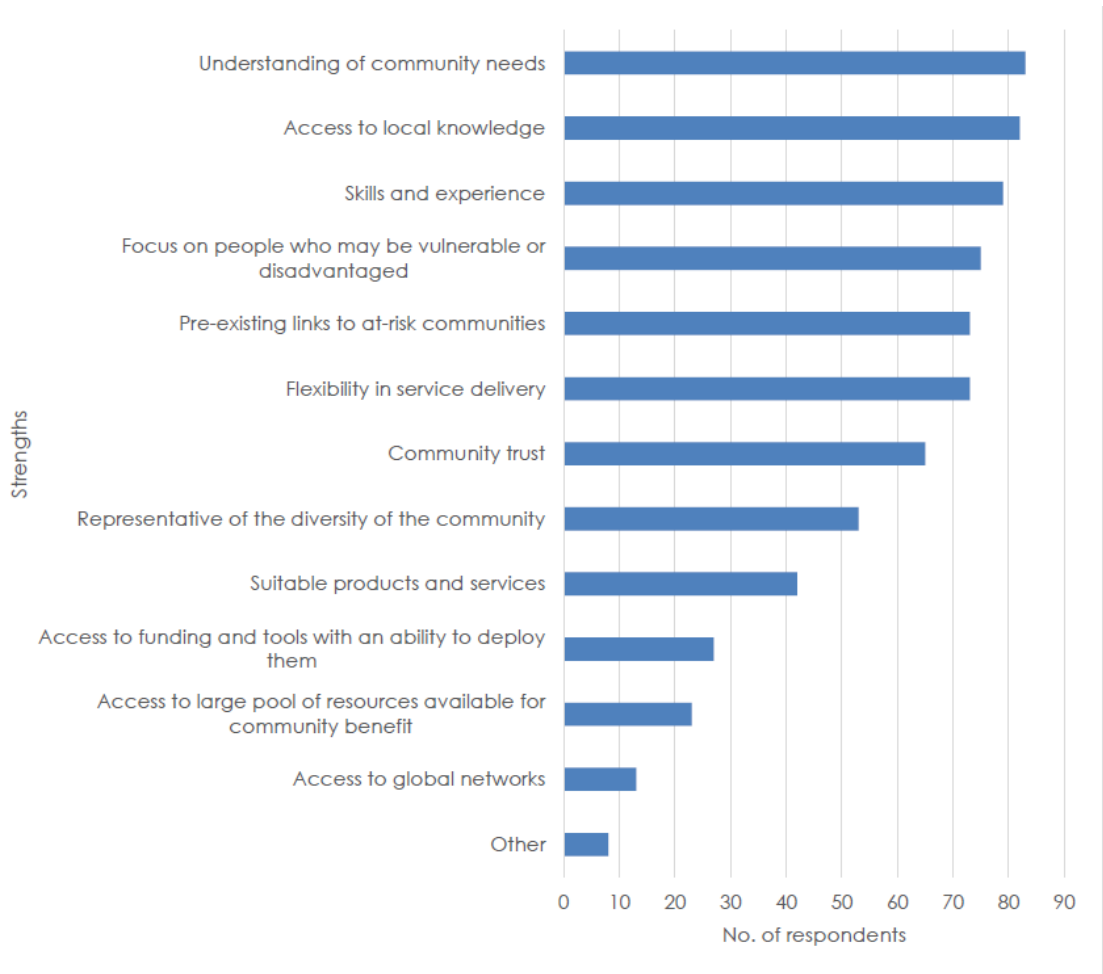


FIGURE 6: KEY STRENGTHS IN ASSISTING CLIENTS AND/ OR COMMUNITIES TO RESPOND OR RECOVER FROM A DISASTER

Regarding strengths, some respondents said:

Community organisations, especially those such as Neighbourhood Centres, have the unique capacity to deliver services cost effectively, quickly, without prejudice, have community trust, are embedded into the social structure of the community and understand the experiences of the community.

Local not-for-profits and community sector organisations hold the local knowledge, and it would be great to encourage more of a space for their voice in the initial days of an event – even if they are in shock and grieving – as State based agencies can come in "all guns blazing" and miss the important subtleties that may become bigger issues later.

Respondents believed overwhelmingly that the key barrier facing the sector was lack of funding followed by lack of capability. The least-nominated barriers were little appetite to collaborate with other organisations and lack of knowledge in how to engage. Responses are shown in Figure 7:

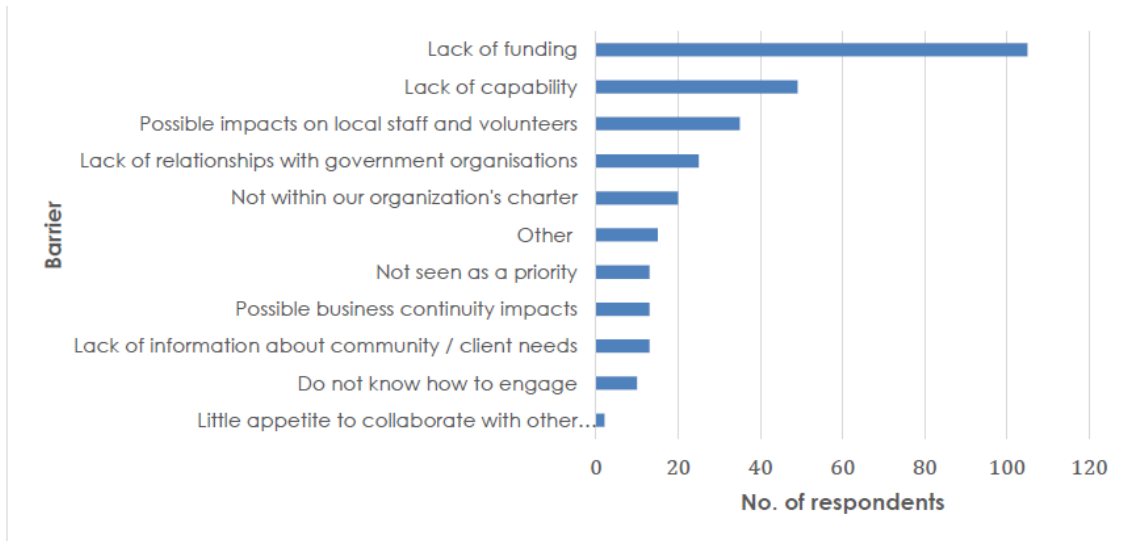


FIGURE 7: BARRIERS THAT EXIST TO ASSISTING CLIENTS AND/OR COMMUNITIES TO RESPOND AND RECOVERY FROM A DISASTER.

Collaboration

Most organisations had collaborated with other not-for-profits or community sector organisations (n=78). Only six organisations responded that they had not and five were unsure. In the majority of cases, the collaboration was rated as either effective (n=45) or somewhat effective (n=22).

Some community organisations had collaborated with businesses (n=45). Thirty-five organisations, though, had not and ten were unsure. Collaboration experiences were effective (n=20) or somewhat effective (n=21).

Most organisations also had collaborated with government organisations (n=77). Only twelve had not and five were unsure. In the majority of cases, the collaboration was rated as either effective (n=30) or somewhat effective (n=31).

Collaboration between not-for-profits and community sector organisations were rated most favourably. Collaboration with government was rated lowest, whilst still indicating a relatively effective partnership. The distribution of scores of respondent's views of the effectiveness of collaboration with different types of partners is shown in Figure 8.

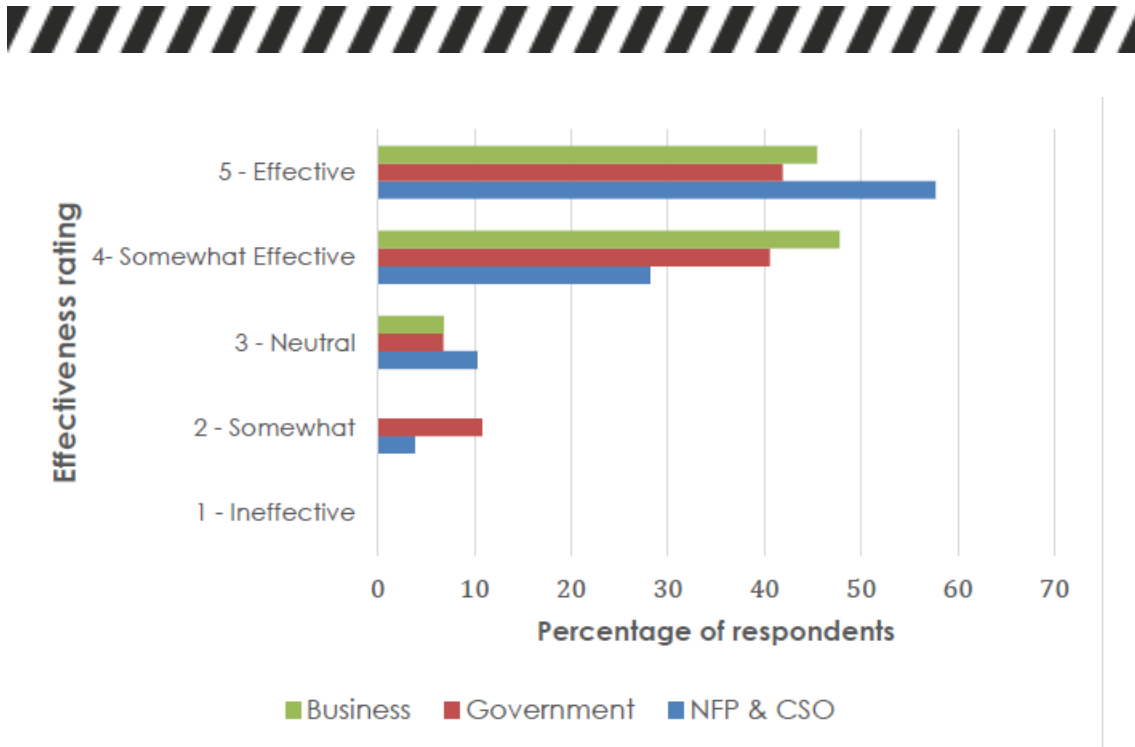


FIGURE 8: EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATION TYPES

Improvement in collaboration between community organisations

Most thought that collaborations between community organisations could be improved through further funding, including ensuring funding arrangements encouraged collaboration rather than competition between organisations. For example:

Sometimes there was a sense of competition.

Respondents also thought that funding should be prioritised to support local service providers rather than outsiders. For example:

Use local agencies who understand the region and communities. This is not an opportunity for outside agencies to come and be seen as 'rescuing' communities. Different agendas will result in potential conflict between agencies and poor community outcomes.

It was considered that funding needed to be delivered more quickly in the event of a disaster. For example:

Recognition that flexibility is needed in responses and use of funding designated for relief of those in the circumstance is distributed as quickly and effectively as possible.

Some respondents, saw the need for increased role clarity and for the establishment of collaborative relationships prior to disasters. For example:

Networks set up so that we know about each other and have opportunities to meet and collaborate.

Better understanding of the services provided by each organisation would be helpful.

Link in with each other more. Hand out contact info about each organisation and what they can do to help.



Formal MOUs, direct communication channels, mutually beneficial relationships.

Allocating central contact people early-on to avoid duplication of services, and coordinate help to those most in need.

A need was perceived to ensure that larger organisations were able to collaborate and partner with smaller organisations. For example:

Big NGO's – they need to have more respect for the small NGOs operating in the community and work with them, not over the top of them.

Training was also seen to be of benefit. For example:

Have not-for-profit volunteers better trained and resourced so they can be more effective during the emergency.

Improvement in collaboration between community organisations and businesses

Again, there were numerous solutions offered to improve collaboration between businesses and community organisations. These included businesses becoming more aware of the role the sector played and its capabilities, building business confidence and trust in the sector, greater focus on working together and sharing ideas, involvement of business representatives in disaster recovery committees and greater funding to enable collaboration. For example:

Share resources, strategies, learn what others are doing so we don't all feel like we are going through this alone. Creating appropriate referral channels for disaster contingencies.

Business being more aware of the role we play during a disaster and that we can help streamline the process.

Good communication. Business is much more prepared to share power, cooperate and collaborate than government.

More time for volunteers to approach businesses and to develop win-win ideas about how business can help.

Business representatives invited to be part of community/ council meetings during recovery period.

Some respondents expressed distrust of businesses, believing that they were motivated primarily by profit rather than what was best for the community. For example:

Businesses visibly treat the emergency area as a "fill the order books" opportunity and then fail to deliver, as this is beyond their existing workforce and purchasing capacity and the businesses are unwilling to upscale just for this short period.

Improvement in collaboration between community organisations and government

Many suggestions were provided as to how improvement between community organisations and government could be improved. These included more



proactive engagement, recognition and closer partnerships; clarity of role, function and governance; greater willingness of government to engage with the community organisations; involvement in planning committees and joint training. Some examples include:

A greater willingness from them to include / involve / generally work with us and value our contribution. More flexibility in their 'plans' and command / control structures.

Government organisations changing their view of CSO / NFP sector, and seeing the value-add we have in connection to our communities, and the resources we have available to utilise.

Increased (mutual) knowledge of roles and responsibilities, strengths and assets of both CSOs and government organisations. More opportunities to build positive relationships and to work / plan collaboratively prior to disaster events.

The community sector to be recognised as an official partner in the emergency management framework, with skills, knowledge, resources and capacity that is recognised, valued and enabled to be contributed to [by] the EM continuum.

Strengthen working relationship of those involved prior to event rather than during event. Clear understanding of the responsibility of each agency.

Written procedures about roles of different organisations and roles known to all relevant organisations.

If a formal agreement between LGAs and Primary Care Partnerships was in place before the disaster, it would be easier and more effective for us to get involved at the start of the community recovery, rather than later.

Family violence needs to be recognised and identified in all disaster management plans and family violence services need to be better linked to support those impacted.

By embedding into their processes, the roles of community / neighbourhood centres. Often the level of collaboration is determined by the desire of the particular worker of the government agency at the time. Their understanding of the communities is minimal and often there is no handover of position information about the various communities they become responsible for.

More involvement in planning together so we understand each other better during emergencies.

Joint training and knowledge about each other's role in emergency management.

Funding models should utilise existing programs rather than create new time-limited programs. For example:



Further funding to existing services and agencies known and trusted by the impacted communities, rather than new programs with time-limited funding.

Some suggested that decision-making and power should be shifted more from government to community organisations. This included the adoption of a collaborative style of engagement and less command and control. For example:

Balance of power better distributed to NGOs, rather than Government holding all the power, funds and decision making.

Communication, shared decision-making, information sharing, fair funding.

... by greater consultation and a more collaborative approach. More discussion, less direction.

From the experience of respondents, it appeared that the success of collaboration differed depending on the level of government involved. Collaborations were viewed as largely effective at local government level and not so effective at state government level. For example:

Local level (municipality) very well engaged. Recognition of the collaboration between state departments was hit or miss.

Closer partnership with local council. More focus and commitment from State Government. for community services in rural areas such as ours.

Capability and preparedness

Capacity is a significant limitation of the sector. Based on the existing funding, capacity and operating model, efforts of 42% of respondents' organisations' responses to disasters could not be sustained for less than a fortnight (Figure 9). Only thirty percent of respondents believed their organisation could sustain responses for three months or more.

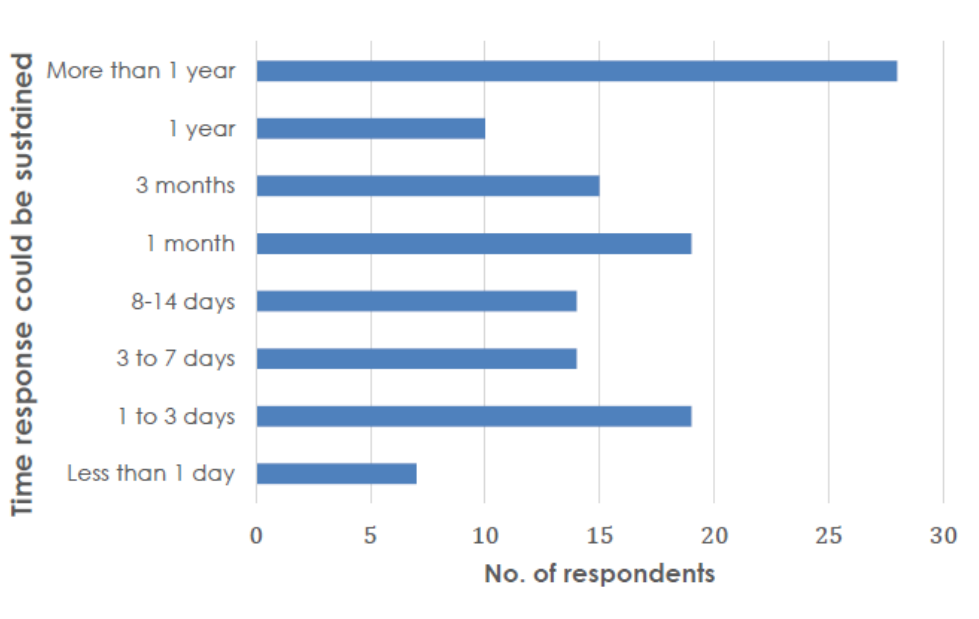


FIGURE 9: LENGTH OF TIME RESPONSE FOLLOWING A DISASTER COULD BE SUSTAINED BASED UPON CURRENT FUNDING, CAPACITY AND OPERATING MODEL



Most (60%) organisations comprising the sector do not have positions with dedicated disaster management responsibilities. Rather, such roles are often taken by the CEO/ Managing Director or directly report to the CEO.

Most staff and volunteers have received minimal or no training in emergency management. Some 32% of respondents reported that no staff or volunteers had received training in their emergency management roles and 21% reported that only a few staff and volunteers were trained. Only 15% of respondents said that all staff and volunteers had been trained in their emergency management roles (Table 15).

TABLE 15: STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TRAINED IN THEIR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ROLES?

	No. of respondents
All staff and volunteers are trained	19
Almost all staff and volunteers are trained	11
Some staff and volunteers are trained	29
A few staff and volunteers are trained	27
No staff or volunteers are trained	40

Respondents reported that their organisations had undertaken actions to prepare to assist in preparation, response and recovery for disasters (Figure 10). The most common actions were building relationships with government emergency management organisations; building relationships with other community organisations, community sector or faith-based organisations that might be collaborators; participating in emergency exercises and developing a documented plan outlining key actions. Twenty respondents reported that they had not undertaken any preparations.

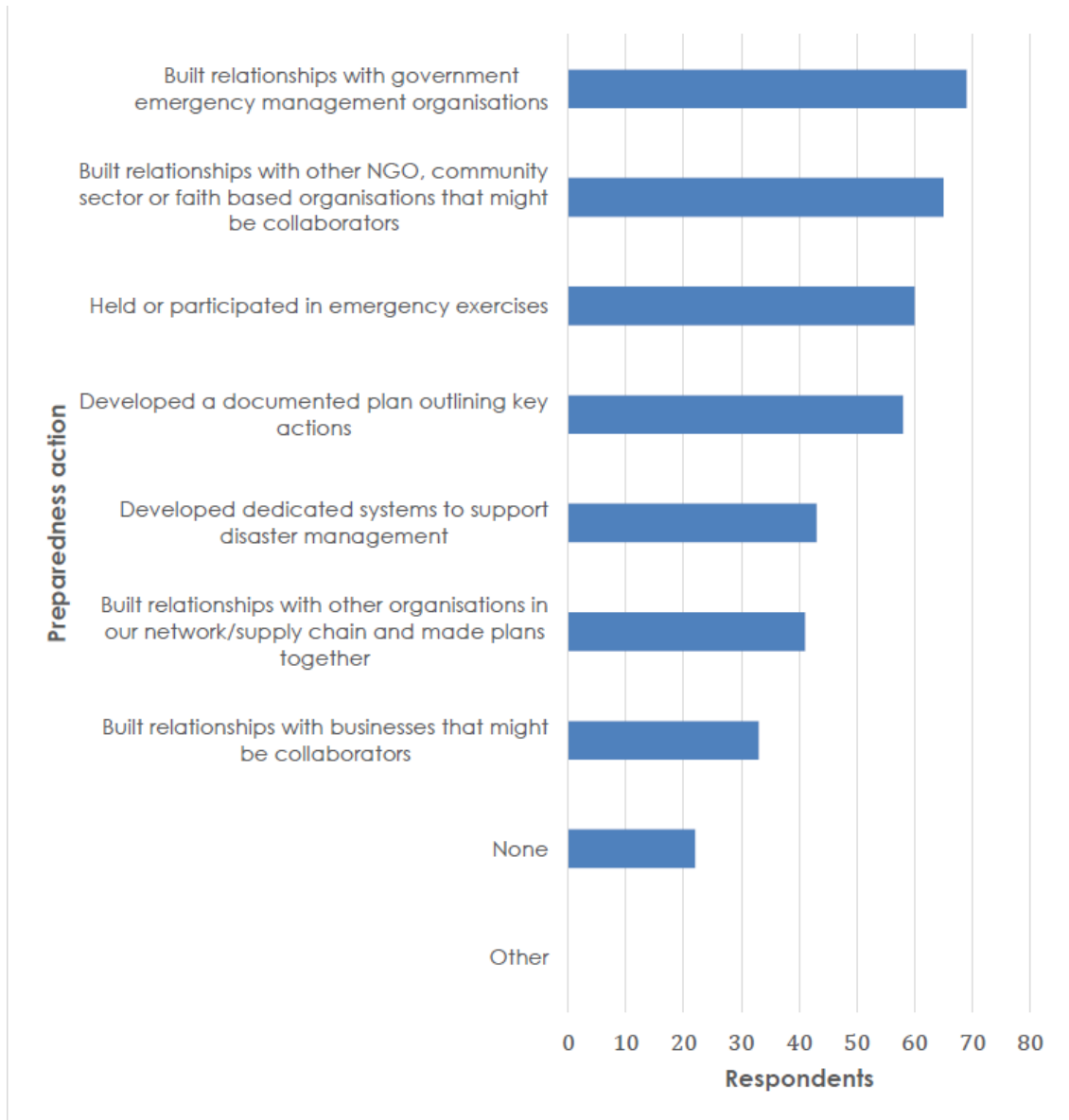


FIGURE 10: INTERNAL ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TO PREPARE TO ASSIST IN PREPARATION, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY FOR DISASTERS

Few (22%) organisations regularly participate in multi-organisational emergency planning committee: 41% responded that they never or rarely participate (Figure 11).

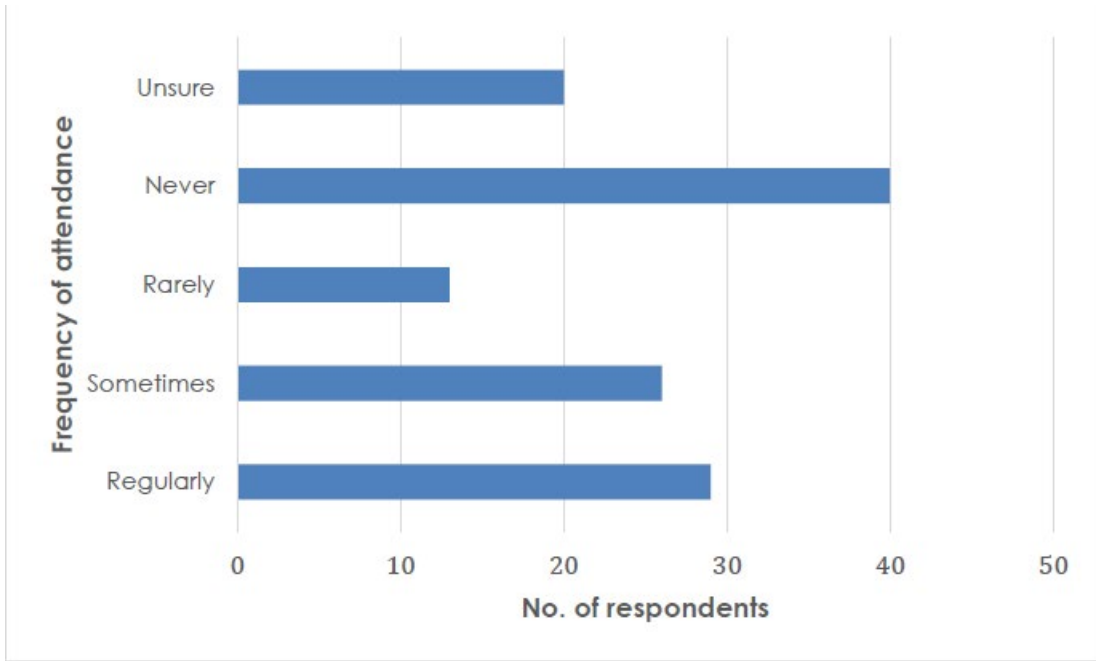


FIGURE 11: FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE AT MULTI-ORGANISATION EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEES

Most (50%) respondents indicated that their organisation had a high or very high appetite to become more involved in emergency management (Figure 12).

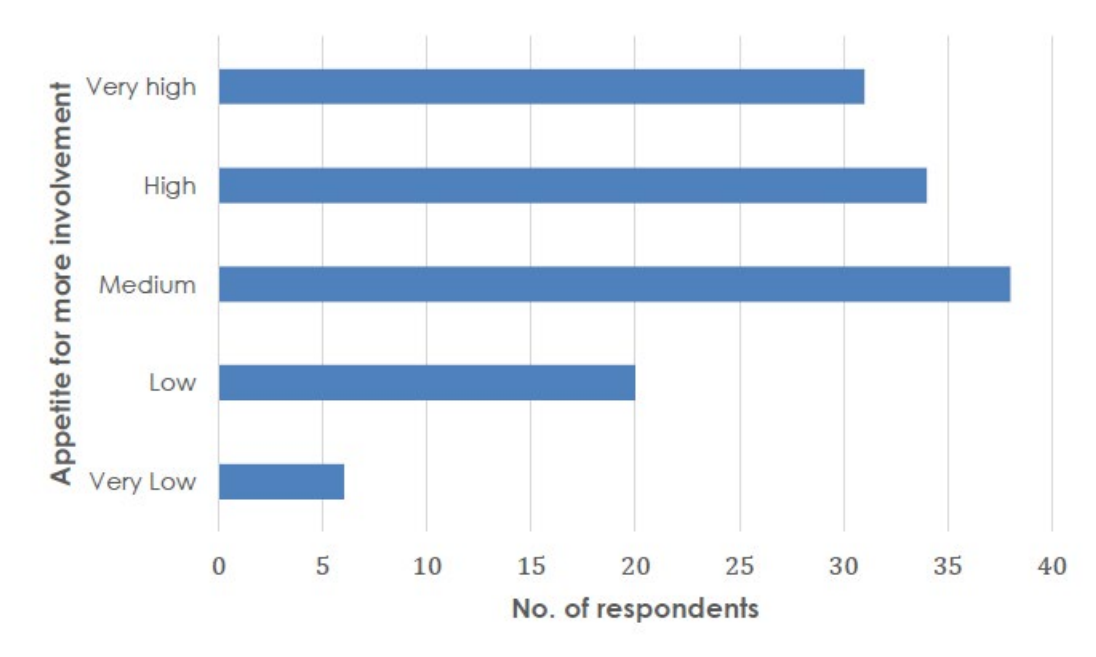


FIGURE 12: APPETITE TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

To become more involved in disaster management, respondents most frequently thought their organisation needed more funding and access to training (Figure 13).

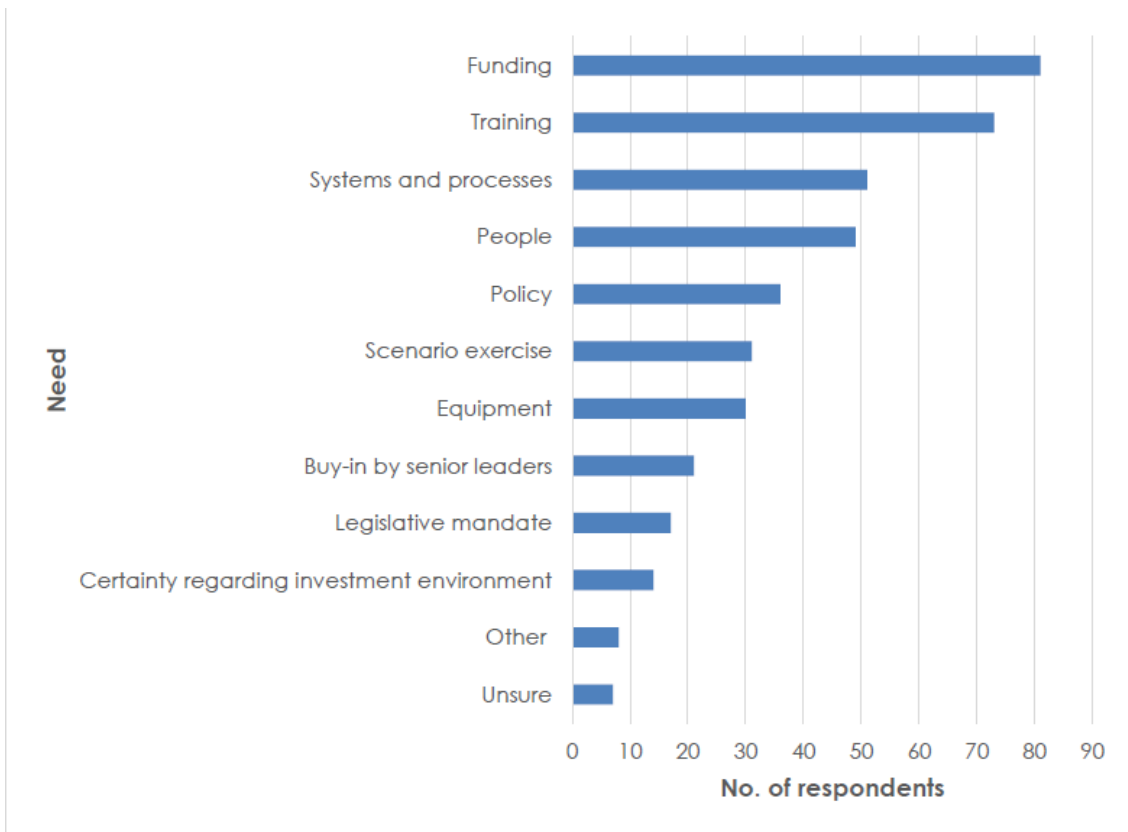


FIGURE 13: ORGANISATIONS NEEDS TO ENABLE GREATER CONTRIBUTION TO DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Similarly, when asked how community organisations could be better supported to play a role in disaster management, respondents, without prompting, gave responses relating to funding and training, but also greater collaboration and recognition (Figure 14).

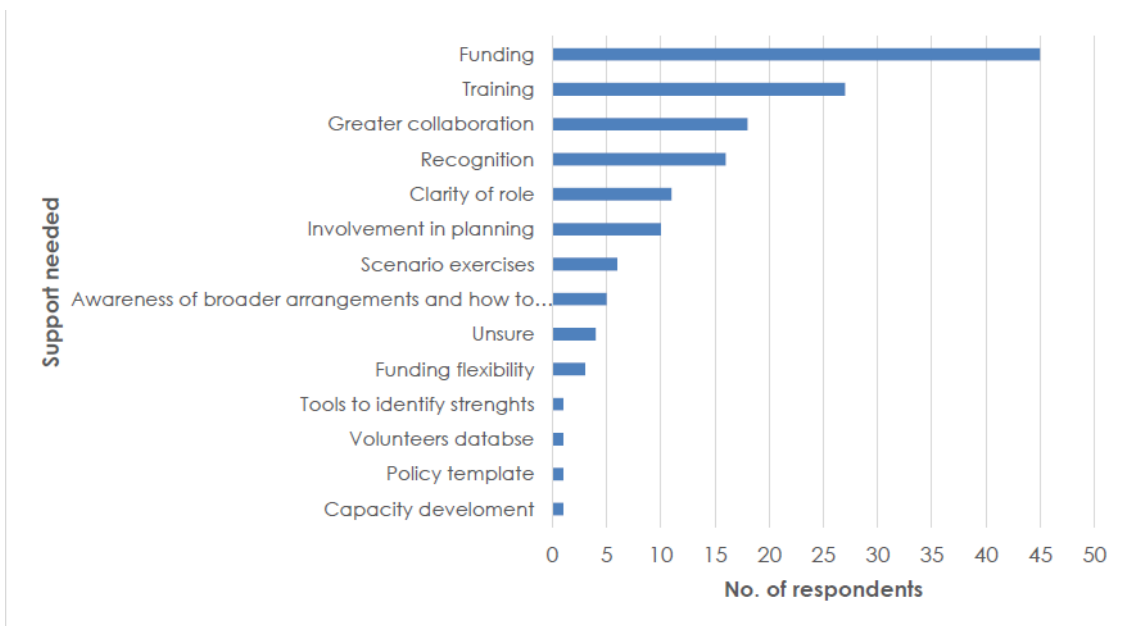


FIGURE 14: SUPPORT NEEDED FOR ORGANISATIONS TO BETTER PLAY A ROLE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Some specific responses included:



Unless funded to do so, it's challenging to allocate specific resources to this. However, there's always opportunities to explore what we could do in a small way that's unfunded with current resources.

Less competition for funding... and protecting each other's 'turf'; a willingness to put ego's aside.

Be invited to participate and learn from other leaders in this space, at no expense to the NGO.

Be acknowledged in their local management plan with specific roles identified, active communication by government both local and above within the planning processes, capacity to access funding to enable the service to deliver more (and without the multitude of conditions and strings attached as just experienced with the drought funding through the QLD government) and access to staff debriefing at no cost.

Local not-for-profits and community sector organisations hold the local knowledge, and it would be great to encourage more of a space for their voice in the initial days of an event – even if they are in shock and grieving – as State-based agencies can come in "all guns blazing" and miss the important subtleties that may become bigger issues later.

Many smaller NFPs and NGOs based at the local level are often overlooked and unappreciated by bigger recovery services, yet have a vital role to play because of their local knowledge, networks and personal connections.

Change of perception about our role in disaster management. See the value that our community connections plan in the role of recovery from disaster, and how our links/ involvement in community could assist in spreading important information about an impending disaster prior to the fact. On the ground, direct service delivery already occurring. Spread the word quickly. Key links to community.

Provide funding to appoint a project worker to establish disaster management processes and procedures, training schedules for staff and volunteers, establish a "disaster volunteer data base" of people to call upon in a time of need, training for the volunteers etc. Annual updates for training etc. Clear definition around roles best suited for the organisation. i.e., at the moment it is probably a little bit of "where do we start/ what would the need be". I'd love to see a certain number of agencies and NFPs in [xxx Town] identified to play certain roles, i.e., our organisation sets up a tea/ coffee etc. marquee, another organisation cooks meals, another organisation collects bedding etc. etc.

Community organisations have the required skills, expertise and community connections to provide psycho-social support to impacted people across each stage of the recovery continuum. However, community organisations cannot deliver the high level of support required without the appropriate recognition and funding of their role in disaster management.



I think all the not-for-profits should be linked in this regard, i.e., Peninsula Womens Health Centre, Woy Woy, Wyoming Women's Health Centre and Wyong's, including all 50+ Leisure and Learning on the Central Coast and possibly the men's sheds. If we are all connected we should have a better understanding of what the community will require and need in a disaster.



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