Diversity and inclusion: Building strength and capability

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> The context in which Emergency Management Organisations (EMOs) work is changing due to social, environmental and economic factors. This is driving transformation across the sector as it strives to work with and build resilience and be representative of their diverse communities. This means that effective diversity and inclusion (D&I) is a business imperative needed to sustain EMOs into the future.

ORGANISATIONAL CASE STUDIES

" Doing diversity without inclusion is like jumping out of a plane without a parachute".

33 interviews were undertaken across 3 case study organisations.

The key findings from this were:
- D&I is not currently well integrated into organisational systems and processes, or connected to day-to-day decision making.
- EMOs lack an overarching framework or process to implement D&I, often resulting in short term and reactive approaches.
- Response-based, hierarchical cultures and tactical decision making dominate in all EMOs and are often at odds with the decision making and skills needed for D&I.
- There is a need to identify, build and value-specific D&I capability, skills and attributes.
- Many activities to date have not been well socialized into the EMOs workforce, resulting in confusion, fear and resistance – particularly at operational levels.
- Creating inclusive and safe organisational environments is critical for effective diversity.
- D&I needs to be framed as a business imperative as well as a moral imperative.
- Deeply-entrenched personal and organisational identities which are often linked to response and heroism, need to be proactively managed as part of the transformation process.
- Culture was the greatest barrier and management was the greatest need identified for D&I.
- There are current examples of effective practice but there is still "a long way to go" in terms of achieving effective D&I.

CHANGING CAPABILITIES

The economic case study focused on changing capabilities and tasks, identifying the following from annual reports and strategy documents:

- All organisations had changed their focus towards their communities and changing technologies.
- Their plans and activities are progressively taking on a more strategic focus.
- Diversity was present in all strategies.
- Two of three organisations had increased training and activities to build capability for inclusion.
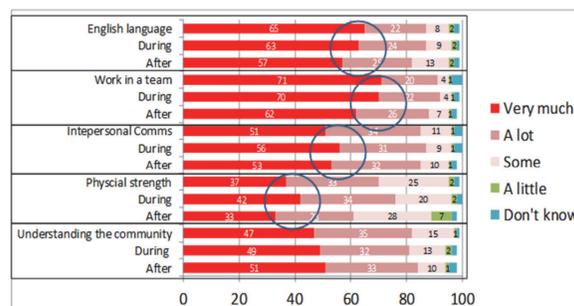
THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Figure 1: Community perceptions of capabilities needed of EMO workers before, during and after a natural disaster.

A community survey was undertaken across 539 community members to ascertain community values and attitudes towards the EMOs:

Key findings were:
- 25% of survey respondents spoke a language other than English at home.
- There may be some strongly-ingrained gender stereotypes that exist amongst both men and women, that may need further research.
- Stereotypes of 'Millennials' may be very misleading.

Perceptions of EMOs worker needed capabilities are shown in Figure 1 above.

CHANGING COMMUNITIES

22 interviews were undertaken across 3 community case studies: regional, rural and urban.

Key needs identified were:
- Aspirational diverse role models for young people.
- Expanded modes of communications to diverse communities.
- To identify and understand new communities such as temporary migrants and new refugee communities more broadly.
- For closer understanding of, and connections between, EMS and community sectors.

A key finding was that:
- The image of EMOs held by many interviewees was of male, heroic and predominantly "white" organisations, which was alienating for many women and people from culturally-diverse backgrounds.

> Diversity and inclusion is a process of innovation and transformation. It is a sector-wide task which can be uncomfortable and difficult. How successful organisations are in achieving effective D&I will depend upon their commitment and tenacity and how well they build and maintain trust during this process within and beyond each agency.

Research reports are available at: https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/hazard-resilience/3392.

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