Guide to Disaster **Recovery Capitals (ReCap)**

Australian edition

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Contact:
Please direct any enquiries or comments regarding this resource to Phoebe Quinn: (03) 8344 3097, phoebeq@unimelb.edu.au or info-beyondbushfires@unimelb.edu.au.

Further project information:
Access the ReCap resources online and find out more about the project:
recoverycapitals.org.au

Further work from the teams leading the ReCap project:
beyondbushfires.org.au
disasters.massey.ac.nz

Illustrations by Oslo Davis, a Melbourne-based illustrator and artist who makes art for publications and projects worldwide. oslodavis.com

Artwork on page seven and icons by Frances Belle Parker, a Yaegl woman and artist from Maclean NSW. dyindadesigns.com.au

Diagram on page three by Emily Campbell, with icons by Frances Belle Parker.

Design and layout by Alana Pirrone, a Design and Data Visualisation Consultant. Alana is the Design and Communications Coordinator for Child and Community Wellbeing Unit at The University of Melbourne. She specialises in data visualisation for knowledge translation. alanapirrone.com.au

Contents

Recovery Capitals

About this resource

This resource has been developed through the Recovery Capitals (ReCap) project. ReCap aims to support wellbeing after disasters by providing evidence-based guidance to those engaged in recovery. It is intended to enable strengths-based, holistic and inclusive approaches to recovery.

The guide emphasises the interacting elements of recovery, using a framework of 'recovery capitals' – natural, social, financial, cultural, political, built and human.

It has been created through an Australia-Aotearoa New Zealand collaboration. There is an edition tailored to each country, although both have broader relevance to other locations. This edition is designed for use in Australia.

How is it structured?

For each of the seven recovery capitals, there is a section outlining its role in disaster recovery, including how it can affect wellbeing and influence other recovery capitals.

The recovery capitals are deeply interrelated, so you will find information relevant to each capital throughout the document, and some recurring themes.

Icons after each statement of 'what we know' illustrate some of the links between the capitals.

The statements of **'what we know'** summarise academic evidence, but they do not represent all evidence and knowledge on each capital. These statements are accompanied by prompts to **consider** in supporting recovery.

Applying the resource to practice

This resource is designed for anyone involved in supporting disaster recovery. It can be used post-disaster, or in pre-event recovery planning.

Given the complexity and diversity of disaster contexts, the guide does not include specific instructions or universal messages for recovery. Instead, it uses evidence from previous disasters to illustrate possibilities and prompt reflection on how this may apply in a given context.

There are existing resources that may assist you to decide what to do in response to the insights and considerations raised in this resource, such as the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Community Recovery Handbook.

More ReCap resources and suggestions for using the guide can be found at recoverycapitals.org.au.

| Themes related to Recovery Capitals | → | What we know from research | → | Consider in supporting recovery |

ReCap and the four recovery environments

This guide can be used in tandem with the widely used 'four recovery environments' framework. The four environments – social, built, economic and natural – are similar to the seven recovery capitals featured in this guide. The key difference is that the 'social' environment is expanded into four capitals – social, cultural, political and human – to enable a deeper understanding of these important aspects of recovery.

The concept of 'capitals' expands our understanding beyond 'environments' in several ways. A focus on the capitals that people and communities have supports strengths-based approaches. It also allows us to see how these capitals ebb and flow over time, and to explore how they can be developed and drawn upon. We describe the Recovery Capitals Framework in more depth on the next few pages.

Social

Cultural

Political

Human

Social

Built

Built

Economic

Financial

Natural

Natural

Four recovery environments   **Seven recovery capitals**
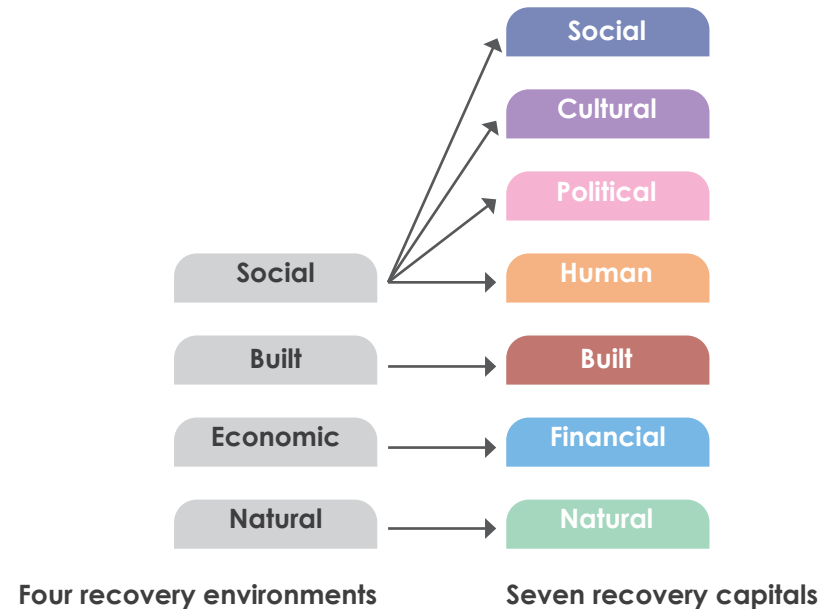
The ReCap Framework

Community capitals framework

ReCap uses an adapted version of the Community Capitals Framework which was originally outlined in the context of community development[1]. It consists of seven capitals – natural, social, financial, cultural, built, political, and human. Definitions of each of the seven community capitals have been developed based on literature and consultation with project end-users to create the Recovery Capitals Framework for disaster contexts, as presented in this resource.

Recovery capitals

The ReCap project uses the concept of 'recovery capitals' to help understand the ways that many elements interact and influence recovery in diverse disaster contexts, and how resources can be drawn upon to support wellbeing.

Capitals are traditionally defined as resources that can be used to generate more or new resources. However, it is important to define how these capitals can support recovery[2] because it is not always the case that more capitals bring more benefits. **Within the Recovery Capitals Framework, capitals are defined as resources that can be maintained, increased and drawn upon to support wellbeing.**

By paying attention to recovery capitals, **each person or community can assess what strengths and resources they already have, and identify priorities** for enhancing their capitals to support their recovery **based on what is important to them**. This aligns with strengths-based and community-led approaches to resilience and recovery.

What is recovery?

Put simply, people and communities are recovered when they are leading a life they value living, even if it is different to life before the disaster event (as described in the AIDR Community Recovery Handbook). Within ReCap, this is understood as a complex, non-linear, multi-layered process that occurs as people and communities work to resolve the impacts of a disaster. Recovery is intertwined with disaster prevention, preparedness and response, and can provide an opportunity to improve upon pre-disaster circumstances and increase resilience.

Interconnectedness

The Recovery Capitals Framework separates recovery into seven domains which, in this project, assists in the process of mapping evidence and producing useful outputs. However, of course, **these aspects of life do not exist in isolation from each other**, and the attempt to separate them may be particularly incongruent with Indigenous worldviews.

ReCap emphasises the **deep connections between the seven recovery capitals**, and recognises that some things cannot be neatly categorised as part of one capital or another. Instead of being treated in separate silos, the capitals should be understood as interacting elements to be addressed together. Accordingly, this guide focuses on **how the capitals all influence each other**.

This artwork by Frances Belle Parker highlights the particular importance of this holistic understanding for Indigenous peoples. It shows the seven recovery capitals as deeply interrelated.

Indigenous peoples & recovery experiences

The experiences of Indigenous people have largely been overlooked in the field of disaster recovery in Australia. We are grateful to Williamson, Weir, Cavanagh and Markham for their valuable insights on this issue[3,4,] which have been included in this guide.

Few resources exist to guide recovery workers and organisations in supporting Indigenous peoples affected by disasters. The 'Recovery Capitals and Indigenous Peoples' resource aims to provide a useful starting point, and can be found at www.recoverycapitals.org.au.

A note on terminology
Much of the knowledge included in this resource regarding Indigenous peoples relates specifically to Aboriginal peoples, and in these cases the term 'Aboriginal' has been used when describing what we know. However, as this resource is intended to be applicable in all contexts within Australia, the term 'Indigenous' has been used when outlining what to consider, so as to be inclusive of Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Social

Natural

Human

Cultural

Political

Built

Financial
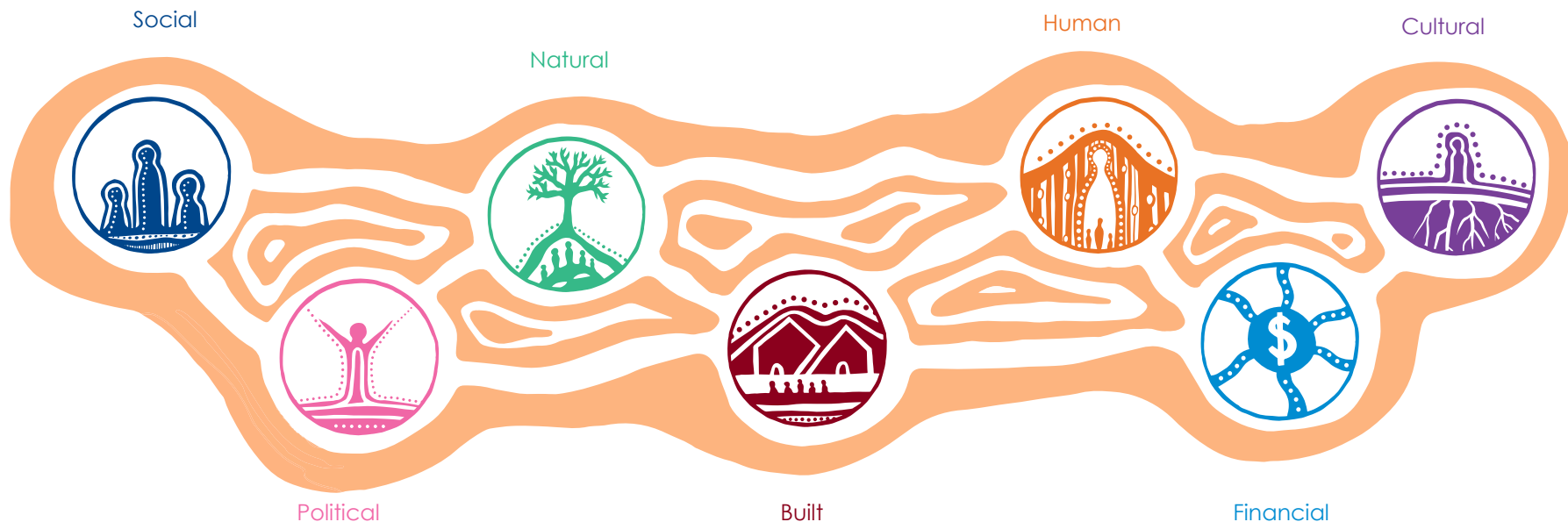
Equity and diversity

ReCap does not just focus on the amount of capital available within communities, but also on the distribution of capital within and between groups of people. This reflects a commitment to social justice and an understanding that disasters do not affect all people equally – instead, **disaster impacts and recovery trajectories tend to reflect existing social inequities and often exacerbate them**, particularly for people who are disadvantaged in multiple ways. ReCap acknowledges that there are a range of culturally, linguistically, cognitively and physically diverse peoples who are all affected by disasters and each has unique needs that should be considered during recovery.

ReCap recognises that differences in disaster vulnerability are created and perpetuated by systems of inequity within societies. By focusing on recovery capitals, ReCap emphasises the strengths that exist within each community despite these inequities and highlights how these can be drawn upon to support community recovery.

ReCap frames each recovery capital broadly, to account for the richness of experience and diversity amongst people and communities. **Each type of capital will have different meanings and relationships to other forms of capital for different people, communities and contexts**. As a collaboration across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand involving Māori, Aboriginal and non-Indigenous contributors, ReCap benefits from different perspectives based on cultural, environmental and societal contexts.

Different recovery contexts

Each disaster is different. Hazard types and scales vary, as do the characteristics of the communities impacted. These contextual factors affect how the various forms of community capital manifest, interact and influence each other and recovery outcomes. The ReCap project aims to support recovery decision-making that is community-led and responsive to different hazards and local contexts.

Multiple dimensions and levels

The Recovery Capitals Framework draws from a socioecological model[5] to explore multiple levels and dimensions of recovery, and the interactions between them.

People, households, communities

In terms of people, each of the capitals can be conceptualised at an individual level, a family/household level, and a community level (with varying meanings of the term 'community', e.g. based on place, identity, interest or experience). This multilevel approach allowed us to explore the interplay between the recovery of people and communities.

We note that these distinctions between individuals and communities are based on a non-Indigenous perspective, and may not align with collectivist worldviews.

Place: Local, regional and macro scales

In terms of systems and infrastructure, capitals can also be understood at multiple levels which intersect and interact with each other: local (neighbourhood or town), regional (city or state) and macro (national or global).

It is important to recognise that people impacted by disaster may live across a wide geographic area, and to consider those that may be left out of local or place-based approaches to community recovery.

Time: prevention, preparedness, response, recovery

Capitals fluctuate and transform over time and have a dynamic influence on disaster recovery. Recovery is a lengthy process, and the experiences in the short-term aftermath of a disaster will not necessarily reflect the circumstances over the following years.

Looking at the complexities of time also allows for a nuanced approach to the **'phases' of disasters** – prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. ReCap treats these as **interdependent and overlapping rather than discrete and linear**. The focus of ReCap is recovery, but this is not at the exclusion of the other phases: for example, preparedness activities influence recovery, and recovery processes can affect preparedness for future disasters. In prolonged disasters, such as pandemics and long fire seasons, these lines are blurred even further with prevention, preparedness, response and recovery activities occurring simultaneously.

Natural | key considerations

'**Natural capital**' refers to natural resources and beauty, and the overall health of ecosystems. This includes air, land, soil, water, minerals, energy, weather, geographic location, flora, fauna and biodiversity[1,6].

Connection

What we know

Many disasters damage the natural environment, causing grief for many people[7]. Others, such as pandemics, can impact mental health by restricting connection with nature[8,9]. However, the regeneration of nature can provide solace, and connection to the natural environment has been associated with better post-disaster mental health, and wellbeing[7–10]. For Aboriginal peoples these experiences can be particularly profound due to the deep connections between land, culture, history, colonisation and identity[3,4].

Consider

► **Involve residents and groups in the co-development of local practices to restore, protect and connect with the environment and the land.**

► **Recovery approaches should be respectful of the history, culture, strengths and circumstances of affected Indigenous communities, including deep connectedness to the land. This involves enabling communities to lead their own recovery; developing respectful, trusting relationships and collaborations; and considering the significance of land, trauma, healing and resilience.**

Natural　Social　Financial　Cultural　Political　Built　Human

Natural | key considerations

Climate change

What we know

There is growing evidence of the physical, psychological, and spiritual health impacts from the threat of climate change (including 'ecoanxiety' and 'solastalgia')[11,12]. Further investigation of the interplay with disaster recovery is needed, given the importance of a sense of safety, hope and self- and community-efficacy in recovery[13].

Consider

► **How might increasing anxiety about climate change influence people's recovery and mental health?**

► **How might people engage in climate action, adaptation and planning for future events as part of the recovery process?**

Risk and barriers

What we know

Certain features of the natural environment can increase exposure to risk, e.g. proximity to bushland or floodplains[14–16]. The natural environment can also pose barriers to recovery, e.g. lack of services in remote locations[17]; insurance difficulties in high-risk areas[18]; lack of financial resources for recovery if local industries such as tourism are highly dependent on the natural environment[19].

Consider

► **What features of the natural environment increase exposure to risk, or pose barriers to recovery? What mitigation strategies are in place, or need to be developed?**

► **How can people and communities be best supported to be prepared and to recover?**

► **What communities are being overlooked?**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Natural | key considerations

Restoration

What we know

Restoration of and reconnection with the natural environment can be a source of solace[7–9]. It can also provide other benefits including financial boost to local economies[19].

For instance, conservation or rehabilitation activities may create new jobs that attract outside workers[19].

Consider

► **How might local activity in industries such as tourism and agriculture be fostered? Explore opportunities to make these livelihoods more resilient and sustainable through recovery.**

► **Consult with local Traditional Owners and other communities to create diverse opportunities to protect, restore and connect with nature. Attention should be paid to appropriate engagement with places of particular significance to Indigenous peoples.**

Remaining and relocating

What we know

Connection to the natural environment is an important part of people's sense of place, and as such people may be more likely to remain in the community after a disaster event[10,20].

Decisions about relocation may be further complicated for Aboriginal peoples whose rights, interest and connection to Country remain specific to the disaster-affected area[4], and who may experience negative effects of relocating including an inability to maintain proper relations with Country[21,22].

Consider

► **Restore local features (such as walks and parks) and initiate diverse and accessible opportunities to enable people to engage with the spiritual and cultural significance of nature in their lives.**

► **Prioritise supports for Indigenous peoples to remain on Country.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Social | key considerations

'Social capital' refers to the connections, reciprocity and trust among people and groups. There are three types of social capital: **bonding** (strong ties between similar people, e.g. family and friends), **bridging** (looser ties between a broader range of people, often cutting across race, gender and class) and **linking** (ties connecting people with those in power, such as decision-makers)[23].
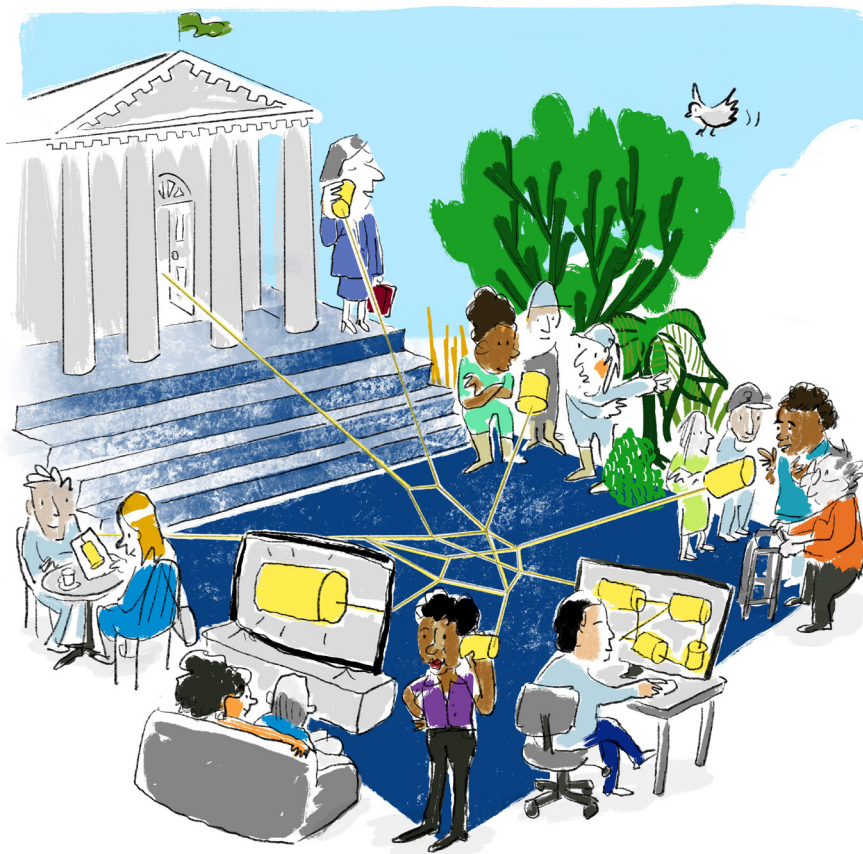
Relationships and support

What we know

Social ties matter in people's recovery – they are generally helpful, but it is complex. Family, friends and neighbours are important sources of support[34–40], and providing support to loved ones can also support resilience[34,41].

People with more social relationships generally have better mental health in recovery[42]. Wellbeing may be compromised if friends and family are depressed[42], have high property loss[42] or leave the area following a disaster[20,42]. Where disasters cause loss of life, the mental health impacts extend beyond the family to friends and community members, with particularly deep impacts where there are multiple deaths within a community[43].

Consider

► **Acknowledge the support people are providing to each other.**

► **Provide community information sessions about post-trauma support strategies to help people take care of themselves and others.**

► **If appropriate, create spaces for memorials and anniversary events in which people can reflect on community members they have lost.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Social | key considerations

Community cohesion and participation

What we know

Recovery is strongly influenced by the degree of connection and participation within and between affected communities[24,25].

Community cohesion can facilitate cooperation, enabling communities to respond to the needs of different community members[19,26]. Disasters can trigger shifts in community dynamics[19,20], with initial increases in community cohesion giving way to disagreements and tensions[27]. Pre- and post-disaster interventions can enhance social structures within communities to support resilience and recovery[26], if they are culturally supportive and empowering.

Following Black Saturday, people who belonged to community organisations and groups generally had better mental health and wellbeing years after, although being involved in many groups had negative effects for some[28,29]. Where many people belonged to community groups and organisations, benefits to mental health and wellbeing were felt throughout those local communities[28].

Community groups can play an important role in recovery decision-making and collective action[24]. Having many close social bonds within a group, as is the case within many migrant and Indigenous communities[4,30,31], is generally a strength likely to foster resilience and recovery[19,32], unless there is a lack of bridging and linking capital[24,33].

Consider

► **Pay attention to patterns of group membership and support the capacity of local groups to continue operating (e.g. because they support many or they support those who are otherwise isolated). This may require funds for facilities, equipment and/or activities.**

► **Participation in community organisations and groups should be encouraged, but it's important to share the load. Observe whether a few people are doing the heavy-lifting as they may become overburdened.**

► **Initiate opportunities for people throughout various communities to become involved and connected with each other in a range of ways, to build ties within and outside existing groups.**

► **Be prepared for conflict within communities, and build capacity to navigate and resolve tensions.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Communication

What we know

Social connections build trust and enable the flow of information, which is critical during recovery as it facilitates decision-making and access to resources[24,29,34,44–46]. This includes connections between family, friends, neighbours, service providers, media and government. Information delivered through strong relationships and effective methods can further strengthen social capital[26,34], whereas weak social ties can lead to a cycle in which poor communication leads to mistrust and blame, further damaging social connections[45].

Consider

► **The ways that people communicate in post-disaster settings may be very different from the way that they did before. It is important to assess how people want to access and provide information in post-disaster settings, noting this may change throughout the recovery.**

► **Central community websites, newsletters, noticeboards and meetings can be important means of sharing official information about recovery. Sharing that information through community groups, networks and social media can also be a way of reaching more people.**

► **Ensure that communications are accessible to all, taking into consideration people's diverse needs and circumstances.**

Natural　　Social　　Financial　　Cultural　　Political　　Built　　Human
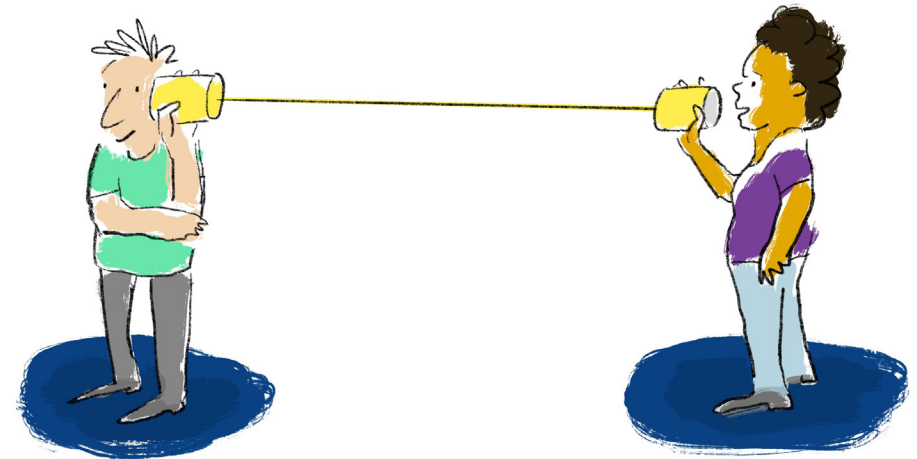
Social | key considerations

Inequities

What we know

Social capital is a double-edged sword – it can be a powerful engine of recovery and social progress, but it can hinder recovery and exacerbate inequities[24,33]. For marginalised groups, trusting relationships with peers, services and advocates can be crucial[46]. However, social capital can benefit those within a well-connected group at the expense of those on the outside[24,33]. Dominant groups often mobilise to protect their own interests, which can inhibit broader recovery, shift burdens onto the less connected and entrench stigma and disadvantage[24,46–51].

There is evidence from the USA that poverty increases more after disasters if there is a growth in organisations that bond people who are alike together and may constrict resources to the 'in-group' (e.g. religious organisations)[33,52]. By contrast, increases in advocacy organisations – which foster bridging and linking social capital across a broader range of people and institutions – appear to reduce poverty rates[52].

There is also evidence suggesting that the sense of community generated by involvement in community organisations is not only linked to relationships within the organisation, but also to the outward focus and influence of the organisation[53].

Consider

► Advocacy organisations should be activated, supported and funded (along with direct service organisations), as they are able to attract external resources, foster sense of community, and promote equity in the distribution of services and resources.

► Identify who is often excluded within local communities, and proactively include them in recovery decision-making.

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Social | key considerations

Decisions: remain, relocate, return

What we know

Social networks and connection to a community can influence people's decisions about relocating or living locally after a disaster. Neighbourhoods with high levels of social capital tend to repopulate more quickly after disasters[24,54]. Following Black Saturday, strong sense of community was a reason people chose to stay locally, while for others damaged sense of community arising from disagreements and changes to the local area led to decisions to relocate[20,39]. After Hurricane Katrina, survivors relied on information about the plans of their neighbours, friends and store owners when deciding whether to return to New Orleans or relocate[24,44].

Decisions about relocation may be further complicated for Aboriginal peoples with connections to Country in the disaster-affected area[4,21]. In addition to the ramifications for social, cultural and political life, these decisions are influenced by the distinctive nature of the formally recognised rights and interests held by Aboriginal peoples – such as native title, which cannot be bought or sold – as compared to non-Indigenous land ownership[4].

People with disabilities may also have less choice regarding relocation due to lack of accessible housing options[55].

Consider

► **Provide information to people facing decisions about rebuilding or relocating about the sorts of stressors and benefits they are likely to face in each scenario.**

► **What local groups, spaces, resources and activities help people connect with each other socially? How can these be supported? Be sure these opportunities are culturally sensitive and accessible to all.**

► **Facilitate ways for people to connect (e.g. through free local events) even if they are unable to meet in person (e.g. community pages on social media).**

► **Are there people who will have less opportunity to decide whether to stay or relocate than others (e.g. those in public housing or in rental homes)? Identify opportunities to help these people to connect and access support.**

Experiences: remain, relocate, return

What we know

Relocating or living locally after a disaster is likely to alter recovery experiences, but the implications for long-term wellbeing are complex and variable. Benefits of staying locally include opportunities for community connection and discussion of shared experiences, although this can be undermined if friends and neighbours choose to leave[20,42,56]. Those who relocate may feel guilt over this and be less socially connected in their new homes, but may benefit from stepping away from the post-disaster disruption[20]. Their mental health may be protected if they have new neighbours who have also relocated from the same area[29].

Negative effects of evacuations and relocation for Aboriginal peoples include an inability to maintain proper relations with Country, disconnection from Country and family, and loss of resources, all of which occurs in the historical context of dispossession and forced relocation under settler colonialism[21,22].

At a community level, repopulation of disaster-affected locations is often an indicator of recovery[54], yet relocation may become necessary if there is a high risk of future disasters[57].

Consider

► **Establish a communications register or online platform so people who have been impacted by disasters can receive information about services, events, grants and research over time if they wish, even if they do not live in affected areas. Consider the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse people, as well as people who do not have access to online technologies.**

► **Recovery support packages (and case support worker approaches) should be tailored to match the stressors that people are likely to face, based on whether they are staying locally or relocating. Planning should include consideration regarding how those who have relocated will be able to access support services and information.**

► **When mass relocation is needed (temporarily or longer-term), enable people from the same area to live near each other when appropriate.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Social | key considerations

External support

What we know

Communities affected by disasters often receive support from wider society, including resources, guidance and emotional support[26,3424]. When this support is responsive to local needs, it generally plays a positive role in recovery[58,59]. Communities with greater ability to draw on these external connections tend to fare better[19,24,60,61].

Consider

► **Identify communities that are least likely to be able to draw on connections to government and broader society and support them to advocate for their needs. Make sure this is driven by priorities identified from within communities.**

Animal-human bonds

What we know

Animals play an important role in the social and emotional lives of many people, including as companion animals seen as valued family members[63]. These bonds are especially important in times of adversity, yet animals are often overlooked in disaster planning and response[64,65]. Loss of companion animals can cause acute distress and also leave people without an important source of support, increasing post-disaster mental health risks[66].

Consider

► **Recognise animal-human bonds in disaster planning and recovery. Reflect on the diverse bonds that are important to different people.**

► **Ensure there are appropriate services and care for animals.**

Physical distancing

What we know

Given the importance of social connectedness in disaster recovery, physical distancing measures in response to pandemics pose challenges to recovery, especially for communities affected by multiple disasters[62]. Further evidence is needed on interventions that can maintain and build social connections in these contexts[62].

Consider

► **How can social capital be built and maintained, particularly for those most at risk of isolation, in the context of a pandemic?**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Financial | key considerations

'**Financial capital**' refers to the availability of and access to resources including savings, income, assets, investments, credit, insurance, grants, donations, loans, consumption and distribution of goods and services, employment and economic activity[6,67].
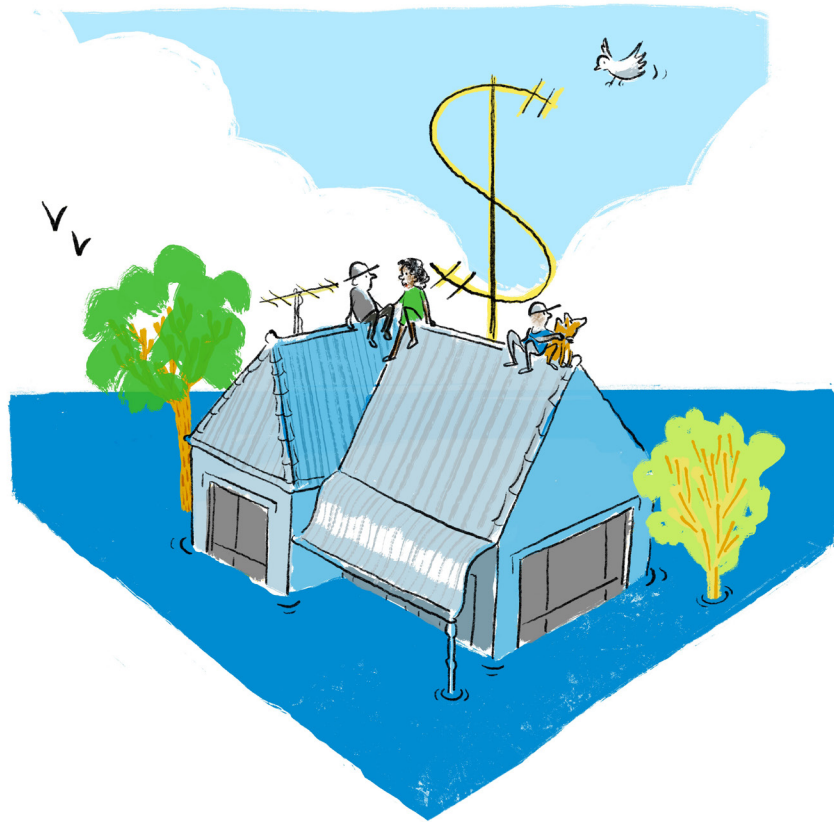
Financial strain and assistance

What we know

Financial strain after disasters may contribute to reduced wellbeing and mental health[68–70] and increased risk for women to experience violence[71,72]. It can also create disputes over funding allocation leading to community conflict[20].

Financial assistance from governments, charities and insurance is often helpful and necessary for people and communities to recover, yet it is not always accessible, timely and adequate[26,59]. For example, application processes often fail to accommodate for people with disabilities, who may have urgent support needs[55]. Funding opportunities often come with timing and reporting requirements for accountability purposes, yet these are often difficult for community groups to meet, which can impede community-led recovery efforts[59].

Consider

► **Recovery is a long and difficult process with various needs emerging along the way, so funds need to be released at different stages over time. While there is a need for accountability in allocation of funds, it is important that processes for accessing financial assistance are as simple as possible.**

► **What assistance should be put in place to help people and organisations in accessing funds? What support can be provided until these funds come through?**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Financial | key considerations

Equitable funding

What we know

Distribution of funds following disasters can be inequitable[4,75], and perceived inequities can contribute to a negative social environment[19,20]. People most likely to lose income include part-time and casual workers and women[75,76].

Consider

▶ **Provide clear information to communities about the basis for decisions about recovery funding.**

▶ **Is funding being fairly distributed?**

▶ **Recovery funding and economic initiatives should focus on those that are likely to lose income and on heavily impacted businesses and sectors. How can the impact be mitigated? Can people be supported to transfer their skills or retrain for roles in another sector?**

▶ **Funds for land management and restoration should include eligibility for Indigenous peoples' social, cultural and political interests in Country, as well as farming and business interests.**

Inequities worsening

What we know

What people, communities and nations had before a disaster tends to shape what they can access afterwards[19,50,73–75]. Income gaps often widen after disasters[75].

Consider

▶ **What training do staff need to help them identify the ways in which inequities exist in communities and how they can be addressed?**

▶ **Critique proposed recovery strategies for issues of equity and unintended consequences for different groups within the community before proceeding (from multiple perspectives, e.g. community, recovery experts, social justice).**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Financial | key considerations

Insurance and investments

What we know

Financial investments prior to disasters, such as insurance, can play a key role in the recovery of households, businesses and communities[77,78]. However, access to these investments is inequitable[79,80], and non-insurance or underinsurance are major problems that can hinder recovery[81].

Consider

► **What assistance is available for those that are not insured or are underinsured?**

Businesses

What we know

Businesses can be heavily impacted by disasters[82,83], particularly when multiple events cascade[84]. This can lead to financial strain, loss of employment and training opportunities, relocation and reduced community cohesion[83,85]. Business impact and recovery is linked to the size, capacities and sector of the business[82,83,86,87].

Consider

► **Identify businesses that are threatened and may need support to recover. What role do they play within the community, and how can these community benefits be sustained?**

External ties

What we know

Significant financial resources for recovery come from outside affected communities, flowing through social and political ties[24]. This means that financial capital at the regional or national level influences the amount of money that can flow to people and communities to support recovery.

Consider

► **Explore connections that community members may have with external decision-makers and networks that could be helpful in bringing additional financial resources into the community – but be aware that well-connected groups may benefit at the expense of others.**

Natural Social Financial Cultural Political Built Human

'**Cultural capital**' refers to the way people understand and know the world, and how they act within it. It includes ethnicity, habits, language, stories, traditions, spirituality, heritage, symbols, mannerisms, preferences, attitudes, orientations, identities, norms, values, and the process and end products of cultural and artistic pursuits.[1,6,19].

Cultural cohesion

What we know

Cultural elements that enable some communities to fare relatively well in recovery include: cultural cohesion, common narratives of shared history, sense of collective identity, shared meaning-making and cultural strategies[30,32]. In particular, the shared histories and close ties that characterise many migrant and Indigenous communities have the potential to support resilience[4,30,31]. However, external forces during recovery may degrade this cultural capital or inhibit its use in recovery[4,19,31].

Consider

► **What are the core cultural features of the affected communities? Involve community members in reflecting on this to guide recovery priorities.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Cultural | key considerations

Inclusivity

What we know

Peoples' thoughts and actions are influenced by their culture, including those of recovery workers[88]. Cultural norms and attitudes towards marginalised groups (e.g. LGBTQIA+ people[89,90], sex workers[46], Aboriginal peoples[4] and people with disability[91]) can have negative impacts on experiences of disaster and recovery through stigma, discrimination and lack of appropriate support. These experiences can be compounded for people who belong to multiple marginalised groups[92].

Consider

▶ **Reflect on your own culture, beliefs, values and background. How might these influence the way you provide support?**

▶ **What diversity training do staff require to help them ensure their work is culturally inclusive and appropriate? How can this be provided on an ongoing basis?**

▶ **Collaborate with a range of groups and organisations to design recovery approaches that are appropriate for all diverse members of affected communities.**

▶ **What attitudes (e.g. taboo topics or stigma) exist within affected communities that may affect recovery? Consider the implications of these when providing support.**

Gender

What we know

Gender norms influence experiences of disaster and recovery in many ways. This includes influencing decisions made during emergencies (e.g. different social expectations of women and men)[93–95], how people behave afterwards and whether this is accepted (including violence and aggression)[71,72], and whether people seek support[72].

Consider

▶ **Embed an understanding of gender into support services in disaster contexts (e.g. through education of recovery workers), including transgender and non-binary identities.**

▶ **How available and accessible are appropriate women's and family services (including family violence practitioners)?**

▶ **Ensure that specialist services are available to people of all genders. Some people may prefer to engage with peer support groups (such as Men's Sheds and gender diverse support groups) rather than seeking formal counselling.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Indigenous knowledges

What we know

The knowledge, values and cultural practices of Indigenous peoples around the world can be highly valuable in disaster preparedness, response and recovery[21,31,58]. However, this value is often not fully recognised, appreciated or drawn upon in mainstream emergency management[4], in part because it might not align with top-down, national or state-wide approaches[31,58].

In Australia, there is growing interest in the value of cultural burning and traditional ecological knowledge in bushfire risk reduction. Yet Aboriginal voices have largely been ignored in broader discussions of resilience and recovery, despite the depth of knowledge within Aboriginal communities about strength, resilience and living with Country[4,21].

Consider

▶ **Establish authentic relationships of partnership with Indigenous peoples as valued and equal recovery decision-makers. Also establish formal mechanisms for engagement, if appropriate.**

▶ **How can recovery be enhanced by listening to Indigenous peoples' experiences and deep knowledge of resilience, healing and how to live with Country?**

Attitudes towards loss

What we know

Cultural norms and attitudes towards disasters, loss and support shape people's experiences of recovery. This includes how people express their experiences, and how others respond[31,38]. People may experience grief over the loss of community members[43], animals[65,96] and the natural environment[4,7] – for example, Aboriginal peoples may experience the loss of a particular tree as a family loss[4].

Consider

▶ **It is important to recognise a variety of relationships and losses. What supports can be provided to help people to cope with losses that are meaningful for them?**

▶ **If appropriate, create spaces for memorials and anniversary events in which people can acknowledge and reflect on their losses.**

Natural · Social · Financial · Cultural · Political · Built · Human
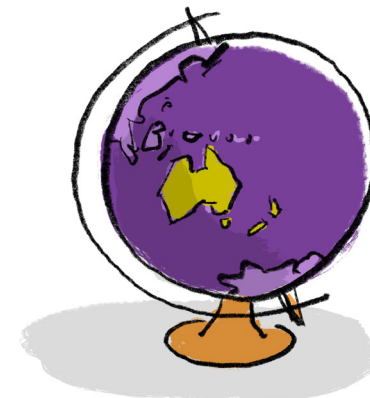
Cultural | key considerations

Connection to nature

What we know

Cultural and spiritual meanings are often attached to nature, such that changes to the natural environment following disasters have implications for mental health and wellbeing[7,10]. For Aboriginal peoples, these experiences can be particularly profound due to the deep connections between land, culture, history, colonisation and identity[3,4].

Consider

► **Restore local features that enable people to connect to the natural environment (such as walks and parks), and initiate diverse opportunities to enable people to engage with the spiritual and cultural significance of nature in their lives.**

► **Recovery approaches should be respectful of the history, culture, strengths and circumstances of affected Indigenous communities, including deep connectedness to the land. This involves enabling each community to lead their own recovery; developing respectful, trusting relationships and collaborations; and considering the significance of connection to Country, trauma, healing and resilience.**

Creative pursuits

What we know

For many people, engagement in artistic, creative and cultural pursuits is an important part of healing, self-expression and growth after disasters[97,98]. Creative pursuits can provide opportunities for personal reflection, social connection and the sharing of experiences[97]. They can also be a means of revitalising a sense of place and community, as occurred through community-initiated art installations in empty urban spaces after the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes[99].

Consider

► **Foster a range of opportunities for creative pursuits for adults and children.**

► **How can community-led creative initiatives be supported?**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Political | key considerations

'Political capital' refers to the power to influence decision-making in relation to resource access and distribution, and the ability to engage external entities to achieve local goals[1,6,19]. It includes agency, voice, justice, equity, inclusion, legislation, regulation, governance, leadership and policy. It applies within and between groups and exists both formally and informally.

Power and voice

What we know

Power is not distributed equally within and between communities during recovery[19,60,61]. Decisions are often made for and by those with the most voice and agency, which can have negative impacts on marginalised groups[4,46,72,80,100].

Consider

► How might the voices of diverse people enhance community wellbeing? Where might there be unequal representation within governance groups?

► Contact those who are not typically involved in local decision making to gather insights about as many different experiences as possible. Remember that chats in the street, over the phone or over a cup of tea can be just as helpful as group meetings or emails. Local health centres, schools, and social services can be helpful in connecting with different groups.

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Community-led recovery

What we know

Community participation, agency and knowledge – including that of Indigenous peoples – are highly valuable in disaster resilience and recovery[19,26,31,101]. Recovery outcomes are best when community capacity and local decision-making is complemented and supported (rather than overpowered) by external groups or agencies[58,59,102].

Consider

► **To what extent are recovery strategies being guided by local decision-makers and adapted to local contexts?**

► **To ensure external pressures do not override local interests, work closely with local government, businesses, services, Indigenous organisations and community groups.**

► **Support community initiatives and build local capacity where possible, but be open to bringing in external resources such as administrative assistance in applying for funds.**

► **What processes and structures are needed to support community participation in decision-making? Consider factors that may inhibit participation by some groups (e.g. need for childcare, transport, flexible meeting times, and accessibility for people with disability).**

► **Resist pressure to make quick decisions on behalf of communities – give communities time to re-gather and build their capacity to lead recovery.**

► **Ensure that people and groups who are not typically involved in local decision making are given opportunities to contribute to community recovery and to be decision-makers in their own recovery**

Indigenous peoples

What we know

The voices of Aboriginal peoples have largely been ignored following disasters in Australia, resulting in recovery strategies that do not consider the historical, political and cultural contexts that shape Aboriginal peoples' experiences – including ongoing colonisation and discrimination. Yet Aboriginal communities are also characterised by resilience, shared identities and close social bonds.

There is developing knowledge of the ways in which recovery of Aboriginal peoples and the broader community may be enhanced by these strengths[4].

Consider

► **How have Indigenous peoples been impacted by this disaster? Consider residents, distinct communities and legal rights and interest in the land as First Peoples. Consider also the deep connections between land, culture, history, colonisation and identity.**

► **Develop and maintain strong working relationships with local Indigenous organisations. Be guided by these organisations and Elders to centre Indigenous peoples' voices in developing recovery strategies that minimise the risks of exacerbating existing trauma and vulnerability. Strategies should recognise and build on the strength and resilience of Indigenous communities.**

Natural | Social | Financial | Cultural | Political | Built | Human

Political | key considerations

External support

What we know

Communities affected by disasters often receive support from broader society, including resources, guidance and emotional support[26,34,40]. When this support is responsive to local needs it generally plays a positive role in recovery[58,59]. Communities with greater ability to draw on external connections tend to fare better[19,24,60,61].

Consider

► **Identify and support the communities that are least likely to be able to draw on connections to government and broader society and advocate for their needs.**

► **Collaborate with community members to explore connections they may have that could be helpful in bringing additional resources into the community.**

► **Establish a multi-year framework for recovery from major disasters to support short- and long-term recovery.**

Policies and regulations

What we know

Policies and regulations, and their implementation, can shape disaster risk and recovery[46,75,108,109]. In turn, disasters can influence the regulatory environment, and while these changes may increase resilience[18,108,110,111], they may also create problems in recovery. For example, stricter building codes introduced after Black Saturday raised the cost of rebuilding, resulting in shortfalls in insurance payouts and higher ongoing premiums[79,81] which led to community backlash[112].

Consider

► **Stay up to date with changes in policies and regulations affecting recovery processes.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human
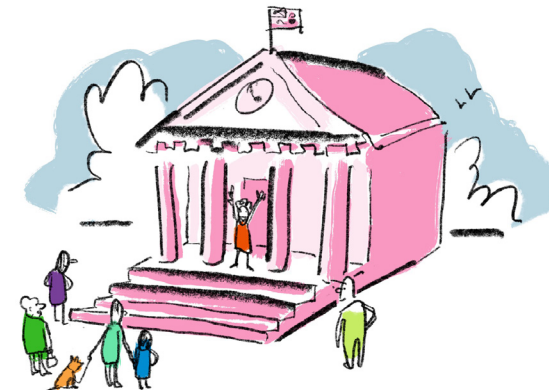
Political | *key considerations*

Influencing knowledge

What we know

Political agendas, public attention and power dynamics can influence what knowledge is produced and accepted after disasters. This in turn can influence policy reform and changes to practice[4,103,104]. The way research and formal enquiries are set up shapes which voices are heard, and what is recommended[4,105–107].

Consider

▶ **Political and social backlash are common in the post-disaster context. Tread carefully with your words and actions and keep focused on your main goal.**

▶ **Be aware that depictions in mainstream media do not always represent an accurate picture, particularly in regards to cultural knowledge and understanding. Draw on your own communication channels to confirm situational information.**

Leadership

What we know

Strong and adaptable leaders can help to access external resources, encourage innovation, support community mental health and foster cooperation within and between communities[19,28,113]. Training and supporting leaders before and after disasters may build these attributes, with benefits to the community as well as the wellbeing of those in leadership roles[28,59,114–116].

Consider

▶ **Provide leadership training and support, both pre-event and post-event.**

▶ **Link local leaders to people with previous experience leading community disaster recovery, for mentoring and support.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Built | key considerations

'**Built capital**' refers to the design, building and maintenance of physical infrastructure, including its functional and aesthetic value. This includes critical facilities and services, housing, vehicles, equipment, information technology, communications, water and energy infrastructure[1].
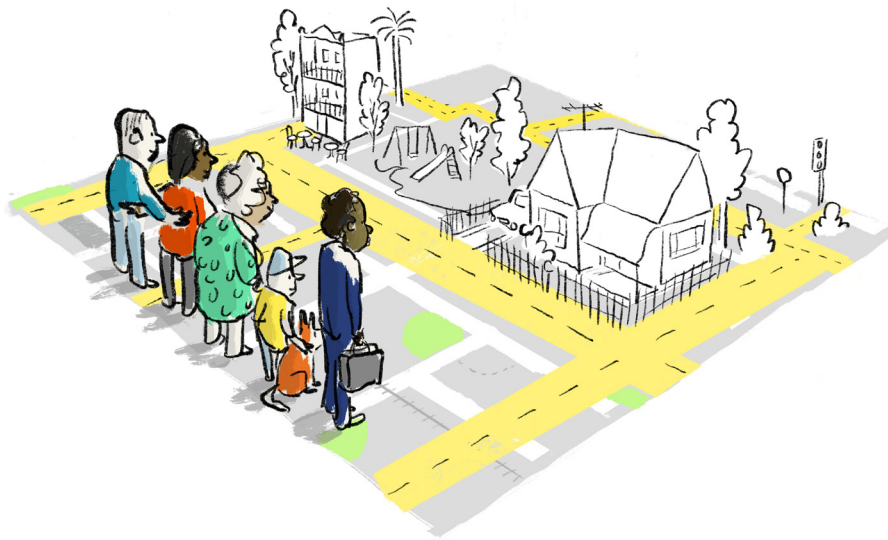
Community infrastructure

What we know

Physical infrastructure can be crucial to preparedness, response and recovery (including telecommunications and transport)[58,124,125]. Public gathering spaces are important to the social and economic function of local communities. Disasters can undermine this through physical damage or, in case of pandemics, closure of facilities, with negative impacts on wellbeing[42,69,117], sense of community[20], financial security[38,69] and business viability[19,38].

Consider

► When restoring buildings and infrastructure, prioritise what is central to community activity, such as roads, bridges, schools, community halls and local businesses.

► Ensure a diverse range of gathering spaces to foster opportunities for different groups to come together, while also enabling socialising in separate or smaller groups.

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Rebuilding appropriately

What we know

Rebuilding is an important part of recovery from disasters that damage property, allowing those affected by disasters to re-establish routines, sense of place and identity[26,34,39]. Rebuilding can also foster community resilience and enable economic activity, which in turn provides resources for further recovery[19].

However, decisions and uncertainties about rebuilding shared spaces can be major stressors after disasters[69], and disagreements about rebuilding can damage the social environment[20]. A range of strategies can enhance these processes, including effective community consultation and allowing time for reflection before making less urgent decisions[102].

Inaccessible housing is a barrier to recovery for people with disabilities[55]. Poorly designed housing and accommodation arrangements can disrupt social connectedness and lead to isolation[54]. By contrast, new or temporary accommodation arrangements can foster social connectedness if they enable people from the same area to live near each other[54].

Consider

► **Timing of rebuilding is important – where possible, rebuilding early can have benefits; however, be mindful that rushing to rebuild can place strain on communities and lead to different decisions than might be made with more time and consideration.**

► **What may be causing uncertainty for people around rebuilding? What strategies could reduce this uncertainty? For example, clear community information, and opportunities for people to access expert or local advice.**

► **Arriving at a consensus can be very difficult when there are different points of view. Careful, inclusive processes are needed to support collective decision-making, e.g. have group discussions led by someone with facilitation and public participation expertise.**

► **When providing temporary accommodation or mass relocation, enable people from the same area to live near each other.**

Remaining and relocating

What we know

Choosing to live locally or relocate elsewhere is likely to alter the recovery experience, but not necessarily long-term personal wellbeing[20].

After Black Saturday, sense of community was enhanced for some by the shared processing of the disaster experience and rebuilding, and this supported wellbeing. For others, sense of community was lost through damage to property, disruption and disharmony, and they were more likely to leave. They had fewer opportunities to process the disaster, but benefited from being removed from the ongoing disruptions and challenges in a bushfire-affected community[20].

Decisions about relocation may be further complicated for Aboriginal peoples whose rights, interest and connection to Country remain specific to the disaster-affected area[4,21].

People with disabilities may also have less choice regarding relocation due to lack of accessible housing options[55].

Consider

► **Provide information to people facing decisions about remaining or relocating about the sorts of stressors and benefits they are likely to face in each scenario.**

► **Recovery support packages (and case support worker approaches) should be tailored to match the stressors that people are likely to face based on whether they are staying locally or relocating.**

► **Prioritise supports for Indigenous peoples to remain on Country.**

► **Explore support services and building adjustments for people with disabilities facing limited accessible housing options.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Built | key considerations

Risk and resilience

What we know

The location, density and design of buildings influence risk from hazards such as floods, fires, earthquakes and pandemics[14,15,118], including health risks[119] and financial impacts[78,82]. The design of housing, emergency shelters and other buildings is often not inclusive of people with disabilities[55,120]. Planning and building regulations can reduce these risks[18], but this can also create problems in recovery by raising the cost of rebuilding, resulting in shortfalls in insurance payouts and higher ongoing premiums[79,81].

Consider

▶ **What risks might communities face in the future? Consider resilience to future emergencies when making rebuilding decisions.**

▶ **Prioritise accessibility and inclusion in rebuilding, involving people with disabilities in risk reduction and recovery decision-making.**

Homelessness

What we know

People experiencing homelessness face increased risk from disasters and barriers to recovery, and disasters can result in short and long term homelessness[121]. Despite this, people experiencing homelessness are often not considered in recovery policy and practice[122,123].

Consider

▶ **Critically examine whether disaster risk reduction and recovery programs, data, funding arrangements and policies account for people experiencing homelessness.**

▶ **Connect with service providers already working with people experiencing homelessness, and invest in targeted support.**

▶ **Prioritise pathways to permanent housing for people experiencing long term homelessness, as well as those whose homes were lost during a disaster.**

Natural Social Financial Cultural Political Built Human

Human | key considerations

'**Human capital**' refers to people's skills and capabilities, including the ability to access resources and knowledge[67]. It includes education, physical and mental health, physical ability, knowledge from lived experience and leadership capabilities.

Supporting others

What we know

Adults and children use various coping strategies following disasters, and being able to help others can be particularly helpful to recovery[34,41]. People provide practical and emotional support to others in many ways, drawing on a diverse set of capabilities. For example, following Hurricane Sandy, volunteers who had already been experiencing homelessness played a valuable role in supporting the disaster-affected community[127].

Consider

► **People benefit when they contribute to recovery efforts, and so does the community. Which contributions can you identify and how can you validate them? How can you support all members of the community to use their diverse skills to contribute?**

► **Provide community information sessions about post-trauma support strategies to help people to take care of themselves and their family and friends.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Human | key considerations

Skills and livelihoods

What we know

Employment sector and status influence how people are affected by disasters. People are more likely to face reduced income if their employment is part-time, low-paying, in particular fields[75], and if they are women[76]. Those working in agriculture, accommodation and food services are generally hit hardest, while income can even increase in some sectors[75]. Community level impacts also vary based the industries that make up the local economy[82].

Consider

► **Who is most likely to lose work or income? How can this be mitigated? Consider supporting people to transfer their skills or retrain for roles in another sector.**

► **Recovery funding and economic initiatives should focus on those that are likely to lose income and on heavily impacted businesses and sectors.**

Recovery workforce

What we know

The recovery workforce must be assembled very quickly following a disaster. The increased demand means that staff and volunteers do not always have the knowledge and skills that they need, which can negatively impact the wellbeing of those in need of support[128].

The wellbeing of service providers themselves is also undermined when demands exceed what they are able to meet[35,129,130]. Disaster recovery support roles can be fulfilling but they can also be challenging and stressful. Workers and volunteers may face increased mental health risks, particularly if they have also been personally impacted by disaster and if training and support are inadequate[131–133]. Planning and coordination by organisations and governments are crucial in meeting these workforce demands, and in all aspects of recovery[58,107].

Consider

► **What additional demands and issues will staff encounter in this recovery context? Are they being provided with appropriate training and support?**

► **What processes and plans does your organisation have in place to prepare for future risks? What is required for activating a rapid response and adapting to changed operating environments?**

► **Explore opportunities to work with local service providers that have existing, trusted relationships with a range of community members.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Human | key considerations

Local capabilities

What we know

Knowledge and capacity within disaster-affected communities influence recovery experiences. Experience of previous disasters or adversity can build this knowledge and recovery capacity, although lessons can also be misapplied if they do not consider the unique characteristics and circumstances of the event at hand[127,134–139]. Multiple disasters that occur in quick succession may have amplified impacts[140] and undermine community recovery capacity.

Consider

► What knowledge and skills do local residents have that will enable them to prepare, respond and recover from disaster? What gaps in knowledge or inaccurate assumptions might exist, and how could these be addressed? Consider multiple scenarios and all members of the community.

► Ensure that recovery processes reflect the value of lived experience. People who are often marginalised from decision making, such as people with disabilities, are best placed to make decisions about their own recovery.

Vulnerability

What we know

Certain demographic factors are linked with vulnerability to disasters, including: age, gender, race, cultural and linguistic background, health, disability, education, household composition and housing status[50,74,135,141]. These factors intersect in complex ways for people who belong to multiple groups positioned as 'vulnerable'[92].

Vulnerability is largely caused by social and financial disadvantage, and policies, messaging and practices that overlook some people's circumstances, capabilities and needs[4,50,80].

Consider

► Who is most likely to be more heavily impacted by disaster, and face greater challenges during recovery? What targeted strategies can be used to support these people? Remember that this is not a simple 'vulnerability equation' – people and groups in disaster environments have a complex mix of strengths and support needs.

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Human | key considerations

Leadership

What we know

Strong and adaptable leaders can help to access external resources, encourage innovation, support mental health and foster cooperation within and between communities[19,28,113]. Training and supporting leaders before and after disasters may build these attributes, with benefits to communities as well as the wellbeing of those in leadership roles[28,59,114–116].

Consider

► **Provide leadership training and support, both pre-event and post-event.**

► **Link local leaders to people with previous experience leading community disaster recovery, for mentoring and support.**

► **Identify and build relationships with those who hold key roles and responsibilities within the local community.**

Education

What we know

Disasters can be disruptive to education, with long term impacts on school attendance and academic performance[142,143]. School communities play an important role in supporting children and families after disasters, but educators and staff are likely to require support to cope with these additional demands[144,145].

Consider

► **What assistance do schools require to meet the needs of children, families and staff? Provide staff with training on trauma impacts, support sessions, access to health professionals, additional staffing and evidence-based wellbeing programs.**

► **Initiate community-based psychosocial recovery programs to support students who are not attending school.**

► **Involve school communities in recovery planning.**

Natural   Social   Financial   Cultural   Political   Built   Human

Capitals icons – artist descriptions

These descriptions from Yaegl artist Frances Belle Parker explain how she has interpreted the seven recovery capitals in creating the icons used in this guide, with input from Euahlayi man Bhiamie Williamson.

The icons also feature in the 'Indigenous Peoples and Recovery Capitals' resource, available at www.recoverycapitals.org.au
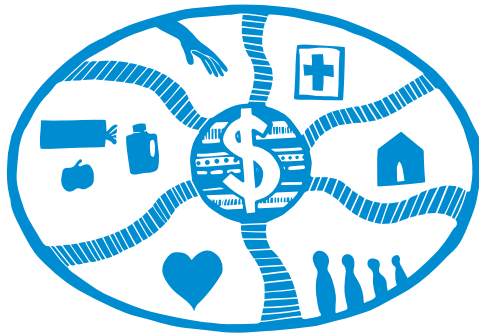

Natural Capital Icon

Connection with Country is pivotal for all Indigenous people. We have an underlying knowledge in regards to caring for Country. The symbolism used in this icon depicts a tree at the top of a hill, the knowledge and stories held by nature is one which Indigenous people have acknowledged and respected for years. Underneath the tree, protected by the roots are the people and these people are the caretakers, the knowledge holders, the storytellers. The markings represent our Indigenous stories and Songlines, and the generations of our Indigenous people who have a deep spiritual connection and a responsibility to care for the land and its resources.

Social Capital Icon

Social and Emotional Wellbeing is portrayed in the Social Capital Icon. To ensure we are looking after our social and emotional wellbeing we need to connect from within. The image features three figures which depict connecting with others. The dots show the individual journey for each as well as a shared journey. The linear markings show the bond within Indigenous communities and a sense of resilience enabling us to get through anything.

Capitals icons – artist descriptions

Financial Capital Icon

Diverse economies are symbolised through the Financial Capital icon. The icon features a dollar sign at the centre which shows an outreach for all other elements which may be affected during disaster relief. The other elements represent those that may be required during times of need such as access to health, shelter, family assistance, relationships, food and outreach. The linear markings depict the pathways provided for equal access to services. During times of disaster relief, people pitch in to help, making sure no one goes without.

Cultural Capital Icon

The Cultural Capital Icon represents the connection between nature and people, as Indigenous people our stories are embedded in the landscape. Just as tree roots grow deeply, we as the First Nations people, our roots and sense of belonging as a person are also embedded into the lands of our ancestors. We feel pain when we lose a piece of our culture such as a scarred tree, or a place, animal or plant from our creation stories. The tree and the figure are connected, not just on the surface but also below.

Capitals icons – artist descriptions

Political Capital Icon

Self-determination is the symbolism for political capital. Indigenous people have continued to grow and gain strength through our own self-determination and leadership. This is despite the historical and ongoing oppression of our people. We will continue to strengthen our self-determination and thrive in who we are, advocating for the many whose voices aren't heard, fighting for justice and inclusion. The icon shows a figure standing up, taking a leadership position. The linear marks represent the adversities we have had to overcome throughout the years. The dots represent the journey we are on as Indigenous people, finding and taking hold of our own self-determination.

Built Capital Icon

As Archie Roach says 'The spirit's in the land'. As Indigenous peoples, we are resilient, adapting to our environment, built or natural.

This icon shows shapes that represent the built environment; under these shapes are figures of people within the community. It is these people who help establish that sense of belonging – we say a home is made up by the people in it and not the building itself. The linear marks at the bottom offer a broad concept in regards to other built infrastructure, e.g. water, roads. The dots represent our journey as Indigenous people, navigating our way through the processes involved.

Capitals icons – artist descriptions

Human Capital Icon

Our underlying Indigenous knowledge and connections with each other make up a large portion of our identity and is one of our greatest strengths. The large figure represents the Elder who is the knowledge holder. The three smaller figures represent the passing on of that knowledge to future generations. The linear markings represent the bloodlines of the people. Our bloodlines are symbolic of our connection to place. There is a focus on the strengths of Indigenous people, our resilience, our way of healing and our practice and knowledge of caring for country.

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Other ReCap Resources

Indigenous Peoples & Recovery Capitals (Australia)

Recovery Stories

Podcasts

Aotearoa New Zealand ReCap Guide

Background Materials

Applying ReCap

Available at www.recoverycapitals.org.au