NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES QUEENSLAND

Queensland Neighbourhood Centres

Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2023-2026

A plan to strengthen the resilience of Queensland's local communities facing COVID-19, flooding and rainfall events, drought, bushfires and other disasters.

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of Country; we pay our respects to their Elders, Ancestors, land and seas.

Sovereignty has never been ceded.

It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

This strategy is available for download
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The development and first phase implementation of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience has been jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland governments under the Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Fund (QRRRF).

Australian Government

Queensland Government

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Abstract
Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2023 – 2026 provides an evidence base on the role and the significance of the contribution of Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) in delivering disaster preparation, response and recovery in Queensland. Furthermore, it explores a range of strategies designed to build on NCCs' existing strengths, to provide a collective vision and clarified direction among NCCs towards disaster resilience.

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The development and first phase implementation of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience has been jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland governments under the Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Fund (QRRRF). This Strategy was developed by Neighbourhood Centres Queensland (NCQ) with Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) representatives.

This project was identified as a priority to build on foundational work undertaken by Neighbourhood Centres Queensland and Neighbourhood Centres through the development of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategies for Bushfire, Monsoon and Drought Resilience. These three strategies were developed in collaboration with centres from designated regions in the state for these specific types of natural disasters. NCQ would like to acknowledge the authors and NCC contributors of the three existing strategies for drought, bushfire and monsoon resilience. Their work has been fundamental in providing a foundation to build upon for the development of this State-wide Strategy.

For their generous contribution of time and insights to inform the research and development of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience, NCQ expresses its sincere thanks to the following Neighbourhood and Community Centres across Queensland:

- Baringa Community Centre
- Benarrawa Neighbourhood Centre
- Bundaberg Neighbourhood Centre
- Burdekin Neighbourhood Centre
- Caboolture Neighbourhood Centre
- Caloundra Community Centre
- Care Goondiwindi
- Childers Neighbourhood Centre
- Chinchilla Community Centre
- Community Plus (West End Community House, Yeronga Community Centre, Annerley Hub)
- Community Support Centre Innisfail
- Deception Bay Neighbourhood Centre
- East Creek Neighbourhood Centre
- Emerald Neighbourhood Centre
- Encircle Community Services (Pine Rivers, Redcliffe and Kallangur)
- Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre
- Gympie Community Place
- Hambledon House (South Cairns)
- HUB Neighbourhood Centre Inala
- Kingston East Neighbourhood Group
- Kuranda Neighbourhood Centre
- Laidley Community Centre
- Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre
- Mt Gravatt Community Centre
- Murilla Community Centre
- New Farm Neighbourhood Centre
- North Burnett Community Centre
- Nundah Neighbourhood Centre (Northside Connect)
- Palm Beach Neighbourhood Centre
- Picabeen Community Centre (Mitchelton)
- SANDBAG Community Centre (Sandgate)
- Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre
- The Community Place (Stafford and Kalinga)
- The Neighbourhood Hub Mackay
- Whitsundays Neighbourhood Centre
- Yeronga Community Centre
- Zillmere Community Centre

A total of 121 people representing 104 Neighbourhood Centres participated in the development of this State Strategy and the three underpinning strategies, including 18 NCCs who participated in two strategies each. Hence, 70% of NCCs across Queensland contributed to the development of the Queensland NCCs strategies for disaster resilience.

NCQ would also like to thank the following stakeholder organisations who participated in the research: Queensland Recovery (QR),

Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), GIVIT, Good Shepherd and Bundaberg Regional Council.

Shared experiences and knowledge among these organisations raised a level of understanding of the role that NCCs play in supporting disaster-affected communities and the challenges that have arisen, particularly in the light of compounding impacts of disasters.

NCQ team contributors to the Strategy included Laurelle Muir, Natasha Odgers, Em James, Chris Mundy, Melanie Maher, Taylor Bast, Jacob Amos and Esther Joseph-Kiernan.

Foreword

Queensland is the most natural disaster affected state in Australia. Whilst Queenslanders have always responded to cyclones, floods, bushfires and drought, the increasing severity and regularity of these events has highlighted the significance of community resilience. Local communities are becoming more aware of the need to be a part of their yearly planning to respond to natural disasters in order to build economic, social and individual resilience.

Additionally, compounding impacts of natural disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have heightened the need for individual residents, small to medium organisations such as NCCs, or large services and government agencies to work together to support one another through these challenging times. There is now an urgency to develop and implement strategic approaches towards disaster resilience, for and with the people of Queensland.

Neighbourhood Centres have been operating in local areas for more than 50 years , using Community Development frameworks to work with their communities and facilitating citizen-led solutions for the challenges that they face. Their local knowledge and relationships mean they are well suited to prepare for, and respond to, disaster affected communities, whether it be an acute event like a cyclone or flood, or a chronic event such as a drought or pandemic. Their location in disaster affected communities has meant that they are often the first to respond with support, such as emergency relief, information and connections for Queenslanders who have lost everything.

As the peak body for over 140 Neighbourhood and Community Centres) across the state, Neighbourhood Centres Queensland (NCQ) has been aware of the incredible role NCCs are playing in preparing for, responding to and supporting recovery from natural disasters with limited resources. This Strategy is significant in its exploration of the role that NCCs play in building community disaster resilience, highlighting the value of community-led responses that complement the Emergency and Disaster Management sectors in Queensland.

The Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience is guided by local community needs and priorities. This Strategy has been developed with Neighbourhood Centres rather than for them. It is built on Neighbourhood Centre knowledge of local communities and captures their process and work when responding to disaster affected communities.

This Strategy creates opportunities to build capacity of NCCs and their broader community It also provides guidance towards strengthening working relationships, particularly at local and state levels, between NCCs and Government agencies, other non-profit organisations and key stakeholders working in disaster affected areas.

The implementation of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2023-26 will require resourcing the sector to enhance the capacity of these Centres to strengthen disaster resilience in affected communities. The value inherent in local place-based NCCs and their localised work needs to be properly recognised as an incredibly vital contribution to the emergency management sector, human services sector and local communities.

Alana Wahl
President
Neighbourhood Centres Queensland

Executive Summary

For many years, Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) across Queensland have been at the forefront of disaster preparedness, response and recovery, particularly those centres located in disaster prone areas of the state.

However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, NCCs have dealt with significant challenges in delivering their traditional role of working with their communities, offering place-based, face-to-face services, programs and activities, which prioritise building relationships with and between people. Additionally, compounding disaster events from bushfire, flooding and drought have further impacted community resilience, increasing the demand for services and support. The inadequacy of resourcing to meet this demand has become a critical challenge for NCCs to manage.

Whilst disasters may vary in form, the process and methodology used by Neighbourhood Centres demonstrates consistent effectiveness in local communities. However, while it is reported that many major non-profit organisations respond to natural disasters in Queensland, the response of local NCCs is often overlooked. A review of the community disaster resilience literature also illustrates the limited research into the role played by NCCs in Australia, and the critical elements that influence delivery under crisis conditions.

This Strategy therefore seeks to expand the evidence base on the role and the significance of the contribution of NCCs in delivering disaster preparation, response and recovery in Queensland. Furthermore, it explores a range of strategies designed to build on NCCs' existing strengths, to provide a collective vision and clarified direction among NCCs towards disaster resilience for the next three years.

The support and development of locally led response and recovery efforts, recognised by the Royal Commission as a strength of the disaster management system is yet to be fully capitalized on as a means of complementing the capacity of the sector here in Australia.[1]

Our research found:

- Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) across the state are working with their communities in preparedness, response and recovery, commonly through community-led approaches.
- The current inconsistency in the strength of relationships between local Councils and NCCs across the state does not support the objectives of the Queensland Disaster Management Plan. The formation of functional and effective collaboration across the stakeholder groups operating in the disaster management space could be a key factor in supporting effective outcomes for communities impacted by disaster events.
- A review of the resourcing of NCCs to deliver their roles in community disaster resilience is required to address common challenges they face.
- Current recovery arrangements with NCCs require a review through the co-development of a cohesive vision for recovery in collaboration with communities and place-based service providers, supported by a delivery model that provides more streamlined access to support.
- The NCC sector has identified the enhancement of organisational capacity, including the upskilling of staff and volunteers, as common areas of need in supporting disaster-affected communities, particularly in response and recovery stages.

This strategy recommends actions prioritising 4 strategic pillars:

PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	PRIORITY 4
Raise Awareness & Recognition	**Strengthen Relationships & Collaboration**	**Influence Policy & Shape Funding**	**Learning & Development**
Raise awareness and recognition of the role, value and capacity of NCCs in the disaster management system supporting disaster-affected communities.	Strengthen relationships towards greater collaboration of NCCs within the disaster management sector; and relationships towards greater inclusion of community members in all stages of disasters.	Influence policy and shape funding models to enhance funding arrangements to NCCs for place-based and community-led disaster recovery and resilience.	Foster and strengthen place-based learning and development to support disaster-affected communities through the complexities and compounding nature of disasters.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The frequency and severity of extreme weather events across Australia in recent years, compounded by the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic, has drawn a focus on the need to improve disaster management arrangements, including preparedness, response and recovery. The Royal Commission into National Disaster Arrangements established in response to the devastating bushfires in 2019/20 noted the scale of the response required for that event and has highlighted the need to expand our ideas on how emergency management services can adapt to meet the challenges imposed by the increasing demands of a changing climate.[1] In the context of shared responsibility, an examination of howNCCs, as key stakeholders in the delivery of disaster support, contribute to, enhance and support the capacity of the emergency management sector therefore becomes a critical issue.

With 149 Neighbourhood and Community Centres across Queensland, the NCC sector 'represents the largest community-led infrastructure in Queensland'.[2] The Queensland Government has recognised the fundamental role NCCs play as 'central to community-led activities' towards achieving the Communities 2032 vision, including commitments to supporting communities aligned with the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience.[3]

The approach and degree to which NCCs undertake community-led work varies greatly across the state, hence stakeholders' expectations of NCCs need to be considered in localised contexts.

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland (NCQ) has worked with NCCs across the state to explore and identify the roles they have traditionally delivered in building community disaster resilience and how that role may have been impacted by the increase in events. As a central facet of this engagement process, NCCs have worked collaboratively to identify shared challenges impacting their ability to efficiently meet current conditions. This process has also highlighted innovations and adaptations made during the pandemic, with a focus on exploring opportunities to enhance capability and capacity in building community disaster resilience across their organisations and with their communities.

This Strategy is a culmination of the three pre-existing Queensland NCC Strategies for Drought[86], Monsoon[30] and Bushfire Resilience[51] (see **Appendix M, N** and **O** for earlier foundational NCCs State Strategies) along with additional factors considered, namely the pandemic and compounding impacts of disasters. This document and its aligned implementation is the continuation of the prior strategies and their implementation through a single, comprehensive strategy (see **Figure 1**.)

Funding for this project was secured through the Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Fund (QRRRF), prioritising the delivery of projects that make Queensland communities and infrastructure more resilient to disasters. The Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Disaster Resilience Strategy has a focus on communities across the state.

NCQ is the peak body for 149 NCCs across Queensland. These organisations are place-based, having a physical presence in the communities where they deliver their services. They operate in a localised way, responding to local issues and opportunities, and usually practice from a community development framework. The Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (ANHCA) has described the role most commonly played by NCCs as a 'community development and socially inclusive approach to the delivery and provision of services, as well as activities for socially isolated and disadvantaged local communities'[4] The ANHCA report also notes the collaborative nature of these organisations, and particularly the existence of networks and partnerships as defining the way in which they operate.[4] As significant social infrastructure, they offer meeting and activity spaces and the delivery of services and responses that meet the needs of the local communities they service.[4]

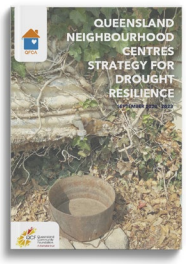
The place-based nature of these organisations also provides them with strong local knowledge and relationships with their communities, as well as with other organisations operating in their areas. This means they are well suited to prepare with and respond to disaster affected communities, whether it be an acute event like a cyclone or flood, or a chronic event such as a drought or pandemic.

Their location in disaster affected communities has meant that they are often the first to respond to communities who have been severely impacted or lost everything.

Base funding from the Queensland Government is received by 128 of the State's NCCs, which increased in 2022 from an average of $126,501 per annum to $230,000 per funded NCC. Ninety five percent of NCCs who receive State funding are members of NCQ. Rooney notes that in addition to core state funding, NCCs also generally need to rely on other multiple sources of funding to deliver their services and are heavily reliant on a volunteer base to support the services they deliver.[5] A critical issue for community disaster resilience is that NCCs do not receive any core funding for the work they deliver as part of preparation, response and recovery.

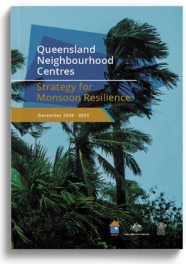
FIGURE 1

Formation of the Qld NCCs Strategies for Disaster Resilience



Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Drought Resilience

2020 - 2023



Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Moonsoon Resilience

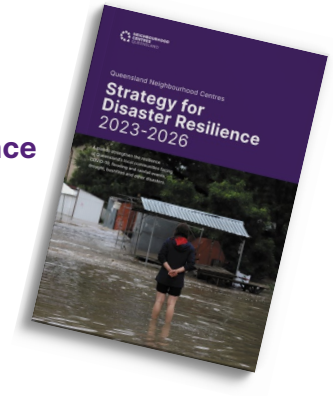
2020 - 2023

Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience

2021 - 2023

Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Reslience

2023 - 2026



1.2 Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of this Strategy is primarily to:

1. Inform

Provide evidence and analysis, building on existing literature exploring the role of NCCs in disaster resilience and associated challenges and opportunities.

2 . Guide and Support

Co-develop a set of shared strategic priorities to guide and support NCCs across Queensland to enhance their organisational capability and capacity to build disaster resilience with local communities.

3. Advocate

Demonstrate the significance of NCCs' work across the state in community-based disaster resilience.

1.3 Audiences

This Statewide Disaster Strategy provides value to three key audiences.

Neighbourhood and Community Centres

This Strategy provides shared priority strategies for **Neighbourhood and Community Centres** at the local level and NCQ at the state level to strengthen approaches towards supporting disaster-affected communities within the broader disaster management systems.

Government and Non-Governmental Organisations

This Strategy provides Government and non-governmental organisations and services greater awareness of how NCCs can, do and could further contribute to the disaster management sector.

Researchers

This Strategy provides evidence and analysis to researchers on NCCs role and value, along with challenges and opportunities, in supporting disaster-affected communities.

1.4 Guiding Principles of Neighbourhood Centres

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland along with NCCs across the state are largely guided by the following statement of shared principles in their organisations, which includes work towards disaster resilience.

NCQ states 'We are committed to respect for human rights and the social justice principles of fairness, equity, opportunity, and dignity for all people.'

An indication of how crucial NCCs are to collaborative efforts to achieve disaster resilience is the alignment of their guiding organisational principles to community resilience.

2. The Research

2.1 Research Questions

A key element of this Strategy is the focus on the role of Neighbourhood and Community Centres in disaster resilience. While researchers acknowledge the importance of the role of not-for-profit organisations in disaster response, there is limited literature exploring the roles delivered by place-based community organisations in all aspects of building disaster resilience, particularly in Australia.[6-12] The development of an understanding of these roles is also critically related to building a higher level of recognition of their efforts and for opportunities to strengthen their support to the emergency and disaster management systems. In order to address this knowledge gap, and to underpin the development of strategic priorities to support the effectiveness of NCC's roles, the first research question is:

> 'What role do Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) play in building community disaster resilience in Queensland?'

The second functional aspect of the Strategy is therefore the development of strategic priorities designed to support Neighbourhood Centres in enhancing their organisational capability and capacity to build disaster resilience with their local communities. This Strategy has developed from the foundational work in the three original State NCCs Strategies for drought, monsoon and bushfire resilience.

The Strategy has also evolved through an exploration of the current challenges NCCs experience, and the opportunities identified by NCCs that can positively influence their roles in disaster resilience. The second research question is:

> 'How can Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) be supported to more effectively build community disaster resilience?'

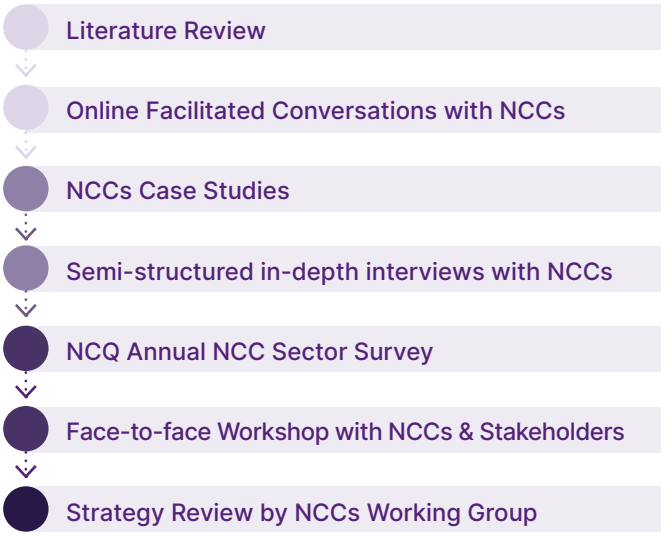
This research also provides an evidence base highlighting the significance and value of the roles that NCCs play in disaster resilience. This can be utilised by key stakeholders in the disaster resilience sector, including government agencies and research institutions, to inform decision making on appropriate levels of funding, policy reform, partnerships and collaboration opportunities to strengthen disaster risk reduction and resilience into the future.

2.2 Research Methodology Summary

The research conducted to develop the Strategy included a literature review of the pre-existing NCCs State Strategies on drought, monsoon and bushfire resilience and broader research. Thirty seven Neighbourhood Centres participated in online facilitated conversations with NCCs, case studies and semi-structured in-depth interviews with NCCs, NCQ Annual Sector Survey, face-to-face workshop with NCCs and stakeholders and two Strategy review by NCCs disaster resilience working group members and other NCCs (see **Figure 2**). See **Appendix B.** for the detailed methodology.

FIGURE 2

Research Methodology Summary



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3. Literature Review

3.1 Disaster Resilience Frameworks: Global, National and State

Critical to exploring the role of Neighbourhood and Community Centres in building community disaster resilience, this section will consider the existing research. Disaster management frameworks from the international, to national to state levels provide a context for how the roles of NCCs and other not-for-profit organisations and communities interrelate with the broader disaster management system. See further detailed context in **Appendix C.**

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2011 (NSDR) places emphasis on community disaster resilience, advocating for collective responsibility across government, business, the non-government sector, and individuals. It acknowledges that "non-government and community organisations are at the forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia."[17]

FIGURE 3

3.2 Disaster Resilience Literature

3.2.1 Disaster Resilience: Understanding Characteristics of Resilient Communities

Disaster Resilience

While the meaning of the concept resilience is contentious throughout the disaster resilience literature, key characteristics of disaster resilient communities have been discussed as community strengths and community capacities.[13-16]

In alignment with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, this Strategy focuses on 'community resilience', including individuals and organisations, within the context of 'disaster resilience'.[17]

Common characteristics of resilient communities outlined in the National Strategy are:

- functioning well under stress
- successful adaptation
- self-reliance, and
- social capacity.[17]

Hence, 'a resilient community is one whose members are connected to one another and work together in ways that enable it to function in the face of stress and trauma'.[18] As summarised by Maguire and Cartwright, the core of community resilience is the ability to 'utilise community resources to transform and respond to change in an adaptive way'.[19]

Community, or social capacity, is also recognised as a core element of social capital. The concept of capacity reflects the knowledge, skills and resources embedded within a community that are utilised to support a community to self-organise, to cope with disaster situations.[14-16,20,21] Social support systems are also pivotal to resilient communities, such as 'neighbourhoods, family and kinship networks, social cohesion, mutual interest groups, and mutual self-help groups'[17], which is core developmental work of NCCs.

Social networks

Social networks and social support are also recognized in the literature as crucial community strengths, and key characteristics of disaster resilient communities.[13,23]

Linking both concepts, Norris, et al.[14] describe social support as 'social interactions that provide individuals with actual assistance', arguing that the relationships built through social interaction can then provide access to key resources. In the context of a disaster situation, these resources can take the form of information regarding evacuation, or advice from a trusted source.[14] The connection between the two elements is also supported by Maida[23], who argues that structures such as social networks become more important in times of crisis, when there is a need for access to mutual aid.

Community Organisations

The existence of community groups and not-for-profit organisations operating in a community are also identified as an indicator of social capital, and of community resilience, with an emphasis on social structure, and as a source of community cooperation.[15] In a time of crisis, the ability to be able to access resources, knowledge and support through a range of established networks and relationships can make a major impact on response and recovery efforts. The literature argues that community organisations can be vehicles for providing capacity, as well as leadership, also recognized as a key characteristic of a disaster resilient community. [9,12,14,23-25]

The literature also emphasises the significance of community organisations working together, arguing that inter-organisational networks are an aspect of community capacity, and of social capital. Collaboration between organisations can result in an enhanced ability to draw on a broad range of information, resources and knowledge, facilitating the rapid mobilisation of support during an emergency.[14]

3.2.2 What International Research and Literature tell us about the role and value of place-based community organisations, such as NCCs, in Disaster Resilience

Community-Led Responses

The significance of the involvement of community organisations as part of a community-led response has been highlighted in the disaster resilience literature, emphasising the value of local knowledge, pre-existing relationships and organisational skills as critical assets in the context of disaster response.[6-12]

Following the disaster of Hurricane Katrina, many studies have also explored the role of community in disaster response. Patterson et al.[6] draw on social capital to emphasise the importance of social networks, and of social organisations as vehicles for people to work together, and to realise achievements that may not be possible at the individual level.

That study also emphasised the role played by community organisations and community-based networks, pointing to flexibility and an ability to adapt, organisational skills, knowledge of their communities, and the existing trust held by their communities, as key to their effectiveness in response.[6] These roles and organisational qualities are key points expressed across NCCs. See further international examples in **Appendix D.**

3.2.3 What Australian Studies tell us about the role and value of NCCs in Community Disaster Resilience

While there is a significant focus in the Australian literature on exploring disaster resilience, a review of the literature on the role of place-based Neighbourhood and Community Centres in delivering community disaster resilience in Australia has identified limited research exists.

In a study exploring the potential role of non-profit organisations including neighbourhood houses in building community resilience to disasters in Victoria, Roberts et al.[26] engaged with non-profit organisations. Presented as a list of strengths, the authors highlight the contribution these organisations can make in involving communities in risk reduction, as part of both preparedness and in recovery.[26] These key strengths related to community connections, grassroots networks that enabled access to vulnerable community members, and knowledge of the local area and community.[26] These strengths are consistent with the international literature.[13,14,27,28]

See an additional example from the Blue Mountains in **Appendix E.**

A significant study undertaken by West End Community House in Brisbane's inner south provided a functional exploration of the role that Neighbourhood and Community Centres delivered before and following the 2011 Brisbane flood event.[29] As a valuable resource for the development of this Strategy, this study has a focus on the roles of a number of community centres who delivered 'front line responses to disaster recovery' at that time.[29] It should be noted that some of the Centres delivering these response and recovery efforts were also directly affected by the flooding yet continued to respond to the crisis.

The report summarised the range of roles played by these centres in disaster response and recovery to have included:

- Hubs of services
- Facilitators of local participation in planning and redevelopment
- Contribution to consortium arrangements to improve outcomes for disadvantaged people and engagement with the wider community in solutions
- Active outreach and innovative approaches to community engagement

- Building community connections and relationships, including with First Nations community
- Improving the inclusion of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.[29]

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland reiterate the above findings and as a voice of NCCs in Queensland, informed by the past three NCC Strategies for Disaster Resilience and NCQ's annual surveys with NCCs, NCQ emphasize the following additional distinctive qualities of centres' relevance to disaster resilience[30]:

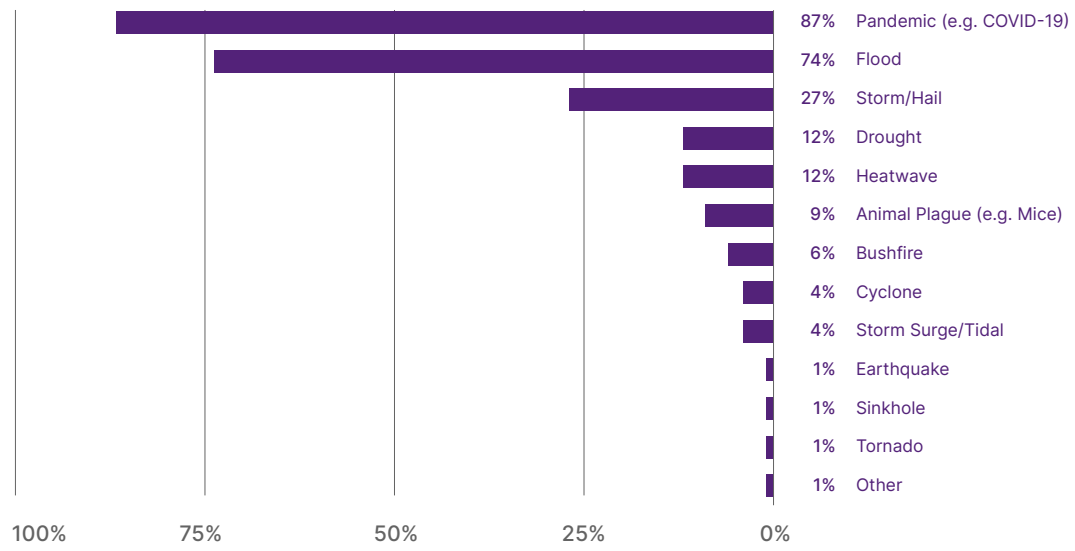
- each has their own identity, unique to the communities in which they are located.
- vary greatly in size, governance and funding models.
- are accessible to all members of the community and embrace diversity and inclusion.
- participate in regional planning and development, forming partnerships for collective impact that improve community outcomes and engage the wider community in solutions.
- Deliver, auspice and incubate community projects that address local challenges and opportunities.
- work with their communities to identify, design and resource local gaps and emerging needs. Enable citizen-led change to build community capacity, resilience, and social capital.
- partner with other stakeholders for a collective impact approach to achieving social priorities.

The NCQ Sector Impact Report 2022 highlighted the varied roles and extensive reach NCCs have to connect and support their local communities.[31] While the importance of local governance, community resources, and fostering community resilience cannot be specifically numbered or costed, 2021-22 NCQ Sector Impact Report communicated important information about Neighbourhood Centres' work towards community resilience.[31] Key highlights of the survey results are presented in **Figure 5.**

In the NCQ 2022 Sector Impact Report, NCCs reported people who were connected with support services and programs were impacted by a wide range of disasters and emergency events, as illustrated in **Figure 4** below.[31]

FIGURE 4

Percentages of Neighbourhood Centres affected by these Natural Disasters



3.2.4 Conclusion

The review of the literature has provided an understanding of the characteristics of community disaster resilience and how the role of place-based community organisations contributes to the building of social capital in the communities they service as a key foundational element of disaster resilience capacity. The international literature has explored how the roles delivered by place-based organisations have supported the formal responses from emergency management representatives and the significance of self-organised communities in the absence of these formal responses. The literature from an Australian perspective has focused on the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships to building community risk reduction.

Community-led responses provide powerful examples of how community capacity can be harnessed through strong community leadership and place-based organisations working together can deliver a well organised response effort in the absence of support from emergency management teams.

FIGURE 5

Key findings from the NCQ 2022 Sector Impact Report

Together, Neighbourhood and Community Centres in Queensland supported over

2 Million Visitors

who attended centres over the 2021/2022 Financial Year

This was achieved through:

149
Neighourhood Centres
Of which 127 are partially-funded by Qld Gov, and 22 are un-funded

1,486
Staff Members
Working a total of 1.7million hours over the year

2,729
Volunteers each week
Working a total of 537,600 hours over the year. Worth over $27.8m.

$126,501
Median Funding Per Centre*
*127 centres partially-funded by Qld Gov

1,011
Funding Applications
to maintain operations

1,715
Community Projects Run
over the year, and supported 835 Community Projects run by others.

Making an Impact

For every **$1** invested by the Queensland Government, the sector produced **$5.25** in community value.

Food Relief
792tne
Equating to $15.8 million in Community Value

Frozen Meals
140,076
Equating to $1.4 million in Community Value

Non-Food Emergency Relief
$3.7m
Equating to $3.7 million in Community Value

Programmed Activity Participants
967,150
Equating to $31.9 million in Community Value

Referrals to Other Services
260,150

Social Enterprises
$3.2 m
Equating to $3.2 million in Community Value

Reference: Mundy, C. (2023) *Neighbourhood Centres Queensland 2022 Sector Impact Report*. Neighbourhood Centres Queensland. For more information go to ncq.org.au.

NOTICE
Stop the spread of coronavirus
Maintain a minimum 1.5 metres away from others at all times.
1.5m
1.5m
FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Visit www.brisbane.qld.gov.au or
call Council on (07) 3403 8888
For health advice, visit www.health.gov.au
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4. Disaster Events Impacting Queensland

To provide a scenario of the conditions that Queensland communities often need to deal with, this section will explore the type of events that have impacted the state, both historically and in ever-increasing occurrences; and what we may expect to respond to in the future.

4.1 Monsoon, Cyclone and Extreme Rainfall Events

The most regular natural disasters that Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland have historically responded to have been the result of the monsoon trough activity in North Queensland. The monsoon season, typically lasting from December to March each year has formed a natural part of the northern Queensland climate.[32] However, the past 15 years have seen frequent severe cyclones cross the coast, causing widespread destruction and flooding. For example, neighbourhood centres in Tully and Ingham responded to Cyclone Larry in 2006, followed by centres in Innisfail and Airlie Beach responding to Cyclones Yasi in 2011 and Debbie in 2017. The effects of climate change are expected to result in increasingly severe and erratic weather patterns, with monsoon-affected areas of Queensland expected to see more extreme, sudden rainfall events and fewer, but higher severity tropical storms and cyclones in the coming years.[33]

See **Appendix F** for further affected areas and impacts of extreme rainfall events.

More recently, three significant rainfall and flooding events occurred over 2021-2022. The first of these impacted Central, Southern and Western parts of the state in November/December 2021, with a second event caused by the remnants of tropical Cyclone Seth affecting the Burnett/Bundaberg region in early 2022. In February/March 2022 communities across South East Queensland were affected by widespread flooding, with the impacts of this event signifying a red flag for this area of the state to expect the advent of more severe weather events.[34] These extreme events also triggered a State Government review of the effectiveness of preparedness and response efforts. La Nina conditions that caused these most recent events had been predicted to continue, increasing the chance of above average rainfall for northern and eastern Australia during spring and summer of 2022/23.[35]

4.2 Bushfire

While bushfire disasters are more prominent in Australia's southern states, more than 90 bushfires were experienced in central and southern areas of Queensland in the summer of 2019-2020. Covering 7.7 million hectares of land, fourteen Local Government Areas (LGAs) were directly impacted by the fires.[36] The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report, has highlighted that the effects of climate change indicate that a continued rise on global temperatures will mean that Australia will have more hot days and fewer cool days, influencing the frequency and intensity of bushfire.[1]

"The NCCs [could] be the first place where people are told to go for support during a bushfire – it is the hub for emergency relief, information, and referral to local services."

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

4.3 Drought

While the Australian landscape has always been affected by drought, the worst drought experienced in Southeast Australia in its recorded history lasted from 2001 to 2009, in what has become known as the Millennium Drought.[37] As of February 2022, the most recent drought event has seen the Queensland Government reporting 34 fully declared drought affected local government areas.[38] Drought is currently not recognised by the Australian Government as an 'eligible disaster'. However, drought declared areas are covered by the national disaster relief arrangements.

Droughts affect not only farming businesses, but also the communities and local businesses in the drought-affected area, resulting in long-term social, economic and environmental impacts. Unlike other natural disaster events, drought can be a prolonged event with the slow onset and prolonged characteristic of drought distinguishing it from other natural disasters, where the duration of the event is comparatively short-term. As the effects of climate change impact Western Queensland, the severity and frequency of drought is predicted to significantly increase.[39]

"When the droughts happened and the drought relief funding grants became available, I was able to put together a drought relief program that was led by us but we distributed it across the centres so the whole region had access to the same money. We specifically sourced vouchers from agri-dependent businesses … So, we were able to stimulate the local economy while supporting individual families."

WHITSUNDAYS NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

4.4 COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to, and compounding the impacts of, recent natural disasters, now in the third year of the global pandemic, the effects of COVID-19 have exacerbated social issues and affected social cohesion. A report commissioned by Deloitte argues that decisions from across government associated with the economic and health impacts of the pandemic have caused flow-on effects resulting in societal impacts. They report 'negative changes in our broader social indicators, including rates of domestic and family violence, mental health, child protection, and justice system'.[40]

An internal survey conducted by NCQ with NCCs across the state exploring the effects of the pandemic on their communities revealed the following themes:

- Increased social isolation and loneliness
- Unemployment, reduced incomes and increased job insecurity
- Homelessness and housing crisis due to increased rent and job loss
- Increased instances of family violence
- Diminished mental health and increases in suicidal ideation
- Decreased access to medical and psychological services
- Food insecurity due to unemployment and homelessness and access
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs[41]

Research on COVID-19 and wellbeing data gathered through the January 2022 ANU poll COVID-19 Impact Monitoring Survey program supports NCQ survey results on psychological distress and loneliness. The ANU report identified that levels of psychological distress in January 2022 were significantly above the levels found in November 2020 to August 2021.[42] The Parliamentary Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation noted a significant impact on the population across all demographics as the result of lockdowns and fewer social connections.[43] NCC's have been highlighted as key social infrastructure to respond to the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness in the state.[41]

> **"Community members were subjected to loss of employment, food insecurity, housing uncertainty and homelessness. Many community members experienced mental health issues, increased domestic and family violence, social isolation and disconnection.**
>
> LEICHHARDT ONE MILE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The survey undertaken by NCQ also researched the effect of the pandemic on the operations of neighbourhood centres. Some of the key challenges reported by the Centres included increased financial strain due to loss of volunteers and staff, as well as loss of income usually gained through venue hire and the cost of adhering to COVID-19 regulations such as sanitisers and masks.[41] Another significant challenge was reported as the increase in demand for services from the community, reflective of the outcome of the ANU poll cited above.

Despite these issues, NCCs adapted quickly to change how they delivered their services to the community. Most reported the utilisation of online and virtual platforms to connect with community members and to continue to deliver counselling services and other programs. Centres also assisted with housing requests by connecting people to accommodation services and in some cases provided tents and sleeping bags for use in safe places. An increase in emergency relief, the provision of food and the continuation of undertaking welfare checks with vulnerable community members were consistently reported.

4.5 Compounding Disaster Events

As the frequency of disaster events increase and occur within shorter timeframes, the cycle of preparedness, response and recovery is shortened, the effects on infrastructure and communities build successively upon one another. The term 'compounding disasters' is being utilised more often with the increasing impact of natural disasters. Gissing et al.[44] define compound disasters as 'two or more disasters occurring within a three-month window and within a given jurisdiction' and offer the 2019-2020 Australian bushfire season as a key example. The Royal Commission into the Bushfires reported that in the previous 12 months, Australia had experienced drought, heatwave, bushfires, severe storms, flooding and then the pandemic.[1]

> "The community and greater Scenic Rim region has been impacted by a number of significant natural disasters over the past few years, including ongoing drought, bushfires, floods and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic."

Samantha Caves
FASSIFERN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Increased demand for long term support

While neighbourhood centres across the state have consistently reported the demand for ongoing support to affected individuals and communities long after disaster events have occurred, reduced timeframes between events can have a severe impact on community resilience, exacerbating the demand for support for mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and domestic violence.[45] Over ten years after the 2011 floods in the south east, anecdotal evidence from NCCs reported that community members were experiencing anxiety triggered by the flood events in 2022.

> "We do a community mental health program, and we have no government funding at all to deliver that. The person who's being relied upon to deliver that is also working in the disaster affected areas."

CEO
NORTH BURNETT COMMUNITY SERVICE

While community resilience has been eroded by nearly three years of pandemic, compounding natural disaster events have the effect of amplifying the ability to deal with problems and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities. As the frequency and extent of natural disaster events increases, the significance of strengthening community disaster resilience becomes more critical as an element of adaptation to the changing climate.

> With neighbourhood centres [during the pandemic], they're all so unique but I feel like the common denominator between the ones in far north Queensland all the way to the border is that we just have that ability to do things differently, when it's needed. Not a lot of places get to do that. A lot of organisations are very rigid in their service delivery and our ethos is to push the boundaries and see what else is out there."

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB, MACKAY

4.6 Disaster events and vulnerable populations

The impacts of disaster events are often more pronounced in vulnerable populations. Although there is much discussion about integrating Indigenous land care practices into disaster resilience planning, research rarely centres the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or discusses the specific impacts of natural disasters on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.[46] Homeless populations are also uniquely vulnerable to natural disasters, yet the loss of shelter used by people experiencing homelessness is rarely considered in disaster planning or recovery, locking people experiencing homelessness out of many of the resources provided to assist with recovery.[47]

An acknowledgement of the significant increase in risk for people living with physical disabilities during natural disasters has generated the development of person-centred preparation kits for this cohort and a number of other vulnerable groups. Quaill et al.[48] reported that people experiencing physical disabilities are far more likely than the general population to become injured or die during disaster events due to limitations resulting from their disability. They also reported a 'lack of support to prepare, evacuate and recover'.[48]

Language barriers, social isolation and limited experience of previous local natural disasters can also increase the vulnerability of refugee and migrant populations to these events.[49] However, a recent report by the Australian Red Cross argues that refugee, migrant and asylum seeker groups often have higher levels of resilience in times of natural disasters due to their experiences and challenges.[50] The Australian Red Cross provides support to community groups, including vulnerable groups hosted at NCCs, and the emergency management sector to enhance the work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities to develop disaster resilience under Australian conditions.

4.7 Conclusion

This section has provided an overview of the severe weather event scenarios that have been part of our history in Queensland, which have become increasingly threatening in terms of their regularity and intensity. The impacts of the pandemic have also been discussed in terms of their additional effect on resilience levels of communities in dealing with continuing events and the subsequent increasing demand for assistance provided by NCCs. The pandemic has also provided NCCs with the impetus to adapt their traditional methods of service provision and connection with community to meet the needs of a changing environment.

The exploration of the impacts of compounding disaster events on community resilience has also highlighted a critical need to escalate preparedness and hazard awareness more broadly across communities, including vulnerable people. This is particularly in those areas that have experienced and continue to experience compounding disaster events. This highlights the importance of addressing the compounding nature of disasters and associated impacts through disaster preparedness community awareness activities.

PISELLI
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400g
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5.The Role of Neighbourhood and Community Centres in Community Disaster Resilience in Queensland

In 2019, NCQ (then Queensland Families and Community Association) recognised a knowledge gap in the literature around the role of neighbourhood and community centres in disaster resilience and sought to more effectively capture, communicate and enhance the work of NCCs in regard to natural disasters. Three State Strategy documents relating to this work in areas affected by Monsoon, Drought and Bushfire were subsequently developed. This section will aim to expand on these foundational documents to consider the impact that changing climatic conditions and the pandemic has had on the roles delivered by NCCs in Queensland in building disaster resilience with their communities.

Plans, policies and reviews being prepared by state and federal government agencies show an awareness of the urgent need to create new approaches to build community capacity to support resilience at the local level.

A clearer understanding of the contribution of the sector in supporting disaster management objectives in Queensland will help to refine these strategies, as well as the policies and resourcing required to support them. An exploration of the challenges that impact the efficient delivery of preparedness, response and recovery by NCCs at the local level can also provide insights into opportunities that can enhance these existing roles to better support those objectives.

The strengthening of collaboration between NCCs and other key stakeholders in Queensland's disaster risk management system will drive the development of a greater awareness of the essential elements of these responsibilities.

Drawing on the data, this analysis will therefore aim to address the first research question:

> 'What role do Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) play in building community disaster resilience in Queensland?'

5.1 Developing Resilience at the Local Level

The place-based nature of NCCs provides them with on-the-ground experience, community connection and local knowledge, enabling them to play an important role in building resilience across multiple sectors of the community. As locals themselves, NCC's long-standing connections with local communities provide shared experiences and understandings of disaster events and the impacts these have on their community. This also provides them with foundational knowledge vital to informing place-based preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

> **"I would like people to know that neighbourhood centres are the eyes and ears of local communities and we're the hubs and souls of where people can find social connection, find places where they can belong, places where they can come together and empower each other."**
>
> THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB MACKAY

While the services and supports offered at each Neighbourhood Centre vary depending on its resources and the needs of the local community, NCQ has found their capacity at each phase of disaster management to be similar, as summarised in **Figure 6**.[51]

The exploration of the impacts of compounding disaster events on community resilience has also highlighted a critical need to escalate preparedness and hazard awareness more broadly across communities, including vulnerable people. This is particularly in those areas that have experienced and continue to experience compounding disaster events. This highlights the importance of addressing the compounding nature of disasters and associated impacts through disaster preparedness community awareness activities.

FIGURE 6

Roles Neighbourhood and Community Centres can play at each stage of disaster event

PRE-DISASTER

Preparation

- Participation in community disaster planning faclitated by the LDMG
- Co-hosting disaster preparedness sessions
- Relationships, with and registers of, vulnerable people
- Disseminating disaster preparedness information to the community
- Continually understanding local community needs
- Business Continuity Planning and Training

DURING A DISASTER

Response

- Disseminating current and relevant disaster information
- Evacuation Centres and access points for safety
- Access to emergency relief, information and referral, support programs and social groups
- Communication and collaboration with support organisations and services

WEEKS TO YEARS POST-DISASTER

Recovery

- Providing material aid - eg. food, household items.
- Wellbeing checks
- Providing psychosocial support and referral to support services
- Places for people to chat and regain social/emotional support networks
- Ensuring people are connected for long-term recovery support
- Rebuilding community connectedness and resilience

5.1.2 Preparedness: A Planned Approach

The approach taken by NCCs across Queensland to support community disaster preparedness is largely influenced by the diverse makeup of their communities and the type of extreme events that can occur in their region. Research on 'Perceptions of Neighbourhood and Community Centres' found diversity to be the primary descriptive factor of NCCs.[52] The diversity of NCCs has been directly correlated with the influence of their surrounding communities. [53] Diversity has been suggested by Ife[54] to ensure the strength and resilience of a whole system. Hence, the diversity of NCCs and the community members they work with can play an important role in disaster planning and preparedness initiatives.

As discussed in a previous section (4.5 Disaster Events and Vulnerable Populations), NCCs across the state work closely with a diversity of community members who often have special needs to consider in developing an understanding of risk, preparing for evacuation and so on. This support can also be significant for those who have no prior knowledge of regional conditions, may never have experienced a cyclone or other local disaster event and who may also experience language barriers such as migrant and refugee communities and people from CALD backgrounds.

NCCs acknowledge the stakeholders from the emergency and disaster management sector, primarily members of the Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs), and the vital roles they perform throughout the stages of disaster preparedness, response and recovery. In locations where NCCs are operated by their local Council, and where there are existing relationships with their LDMGs, has reflected the greatest representation of NCCs in disaster planning and co-hosting of community preparedness activities.

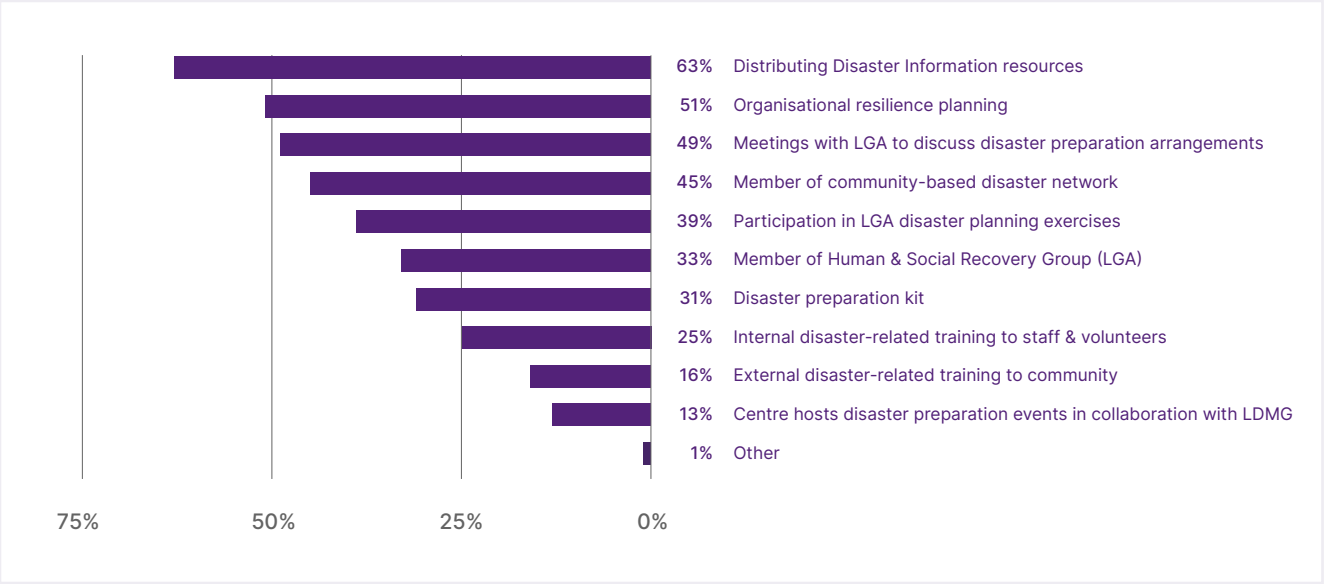
The positioning of NCCs in LDMGs is most applicable within the Human and Social Recovery Sub-Groups, which 'relates to the emotional, social, physical and psychological health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities following a disaster'.[55] While positive collaborations between NCCs and the disaster management sector exist (as shown in **Figure 7** and the following case studies) and have been increasing, the potential for more NCC collaborations and greater coverage across the state exists, particularly in terms of opening avenues for vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community to be included, informed and resourced in disaster planning and preparedness.

According to the NCQ Sector Impact Report 2022, 'the most widespread disaster preparation activity conducted by NCC's is the distribution of disaster information (63% of NCC's). When coupled with meetings (49%) and disaster planning (39%), NCC's can play a vital role in the dissemination of information to prepare for disaster events.'[31]

Only one third of NCC's are members of the Human and Social Recovery Groups connected with the LDMG's. 'This demonstrates a need to build further partnerships across the state between LGA's and NCC's in disaster preparation and planning. However, despite this percentage, it is in the sphere of community-led initiatives that NCC's are most active with 45% being a member of community-based disaster networks.'[31]

FIGURE 7

Percentages of Neighbourhood Centres providing Disaster Preparation services and supports



Preparedness Case Studies

See further detailed context in **Appendix G.**

A number of community centres have engaged broader community stakeholders to hold awareness and preparedness sessions to assist communities to be more prepared and resilient in the event of disaster. These sessions have been well attended and well received, highlighting the growing role NCCs play in preparedness, as well as recovery.

Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre Emergency Preparedness Session

Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre hosted an emergency preparedness session, presenting information on how community members can prepare themselves and their properties for unpredictable weather events. This highlighted the pivotal role Neighbourhood Centres play in creating more resilient communities, as well as informing the community of the role NCCs play in the recovery phase.

Kingston East Neighbourhood Group: Community Preparation Workshops: Supporting Preparation and a Culture of Awareness

The Kingston East Neighbourhood Group (KENG) hosted disaster preparedness workshops by Logan City Council's Disaster Management Team, increasing community understanding on how to prepare and respond to extreme weather events in local neighbourhoods.

Bundaberg and District Neighbourhood Centre

Bundaberg and District Neighbourhood Centre reached out to community leaders and connectors to maintain support and connection to CALD community members, enabling up-to-date information on the

pandemic and natural disasters ensuring resilience within the community when managing disaster events.

> **"We always work on collaborative relationships because community groups use the centre for free seven days and nights a week. This builds a lot of trust and goodwill so everything that we do involves collaborative relationships really."**
>
> KURANDA NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

5.1.3 Community-Led: Self-Organised and Prepared

Preparedness activities facilitated by many NCCs often extend beyond the hosting of workshop sessions to specifically addressing key local issues identified by their communities. NCCs have reported a range of existing initiatives centred around community planning. These projects are specifically designed and delivered by their communities and are aimed at strengthening community capacity to be self-organised and prepared for disaster events, considering local conditions and needs.

The National Principles for Disaster Recovery 'advocate a community-led approach to empower individuals and communities to manage their own recovery'. [56] Community development is a recognised method of community-led practices, which is an underpinning framework of many NCCs. Key outcomes for local communities achieved by applying community development approaches to recovery include increased information, access, sense of safety, health, participation, sense of belonging, cohesion, identity and economic recovery.[57]

Neighbourhood Centres provide valuable social infrastructure to be positioned in community-led work. However, NCCs' capacity, namely limited funding allocations and disaster-specified skills for disaster resilience work, is a restricting factor to the extent to which many NCCs can utilise their community development skills to extend this work to a whole-of-community scale.

Many NCCs work in collaboration with their communities and with a network of local service providers, community organisations, businesses and with emergency management staff to develop place-based community preparedness initiatives. Key strengths of NCCs is how they build relationships with local support providers and identify key people in their communities who can mobilise networks in the advent of a disaster event. It is inevitable that community-led preparedness activities are increasing, particularly as more discrete communities recognise the limitations of their dependence on formal emergency management responses and with natural disaster events occurring with more regularity and impacting larger areas.

A report following the 2009 Victorian 'Black Saturday' bushfire disaster describes community-led recovery approaches as 'the optimal approach to sustainable disaster recovery, fostering self-reliance and self-determination within affected communities'. [58]

The strength of community-led initiatives lies in lived experience of local conditions and needs, supported by community capacity. Identified in the literature as a key characteristic of a disaster resilient community, community capacity is also recognised as an element of social capital[14-16]

Key characteristics of community capacity include:

- Development of community resources
- An ability to recover with little external assistance
- Leadership
- Skills and knowledge
- The existence of not-for-profit organisations
- Inter-organisational networks[58]

A study of perceptions of agencies and large organisations in Brisbane and surrounding areas in 2022 highlighted NCCs as 'hubs of community knowledge', where community connections can form and social capital can develop.[52] The approaches of NCCs were recognised as being 'localised and adaptive to their community', which demonstrate the relevance of their roles in 'capacity building and resilience during times of disaster'.[52]

"We are able to identify the issues and the challenges in our community and then respond with opportunities. We've built that relationship with people, it's all about building rapport and listening to stories and being mindful that we aren't taking ownership of other people's stories, we're working with them".

A key function of NCCs in community-led initiatives is in a developmental role, working alongside communities to support the identification of issues and challenges and to empower community members to take collective action. As expressed by one centre coordinator,

It is important for all stakeholders to understand that the level of NCCs' capacity for coordination and participation into community-led disaster-related planning and initiatives will be dependent on both the NCCs' capacity of time, skills and resources, and the level of existing community capacity and interest.

The case studies of community-led initiatives included in this Strategy provide summaries of projects that are place-based, fit for purpose adaptations designed as solutions to issues that have been identified as critical to the survival of a community over a series of events, or that can support the community in preparedness and in the recovery of the community.

The following examples also highlight a range of community-led initiatives that are either already operative, or are in development through NCCs in Queensland:

- Food security to ensure community have ingredients, including canned food and home-grown produce, together with a cookbook to support the preparation of meals over several days during isolation.
- Community mapping to identify local services and other key stakeholders to enable communication and coordination to support response in a disaster situation.
- Development of opportunities for rural community members to connect and support each other in the face of compounding disaster events.
- Development of a group of trained local people who connect with impacted community members in the recovery phase to deliver a welfare check and advise the NCC of any support required.

The various methodologies and development frameworks behind these initiatives, hold insights that can support other communities to develop place-based solutions, or to adapt existing models to suit their own local conditions and needs.

Some examples of how NCCs work with local communities outlined below.

Community-led Preparedness Case Studies

A number of community-led and disaster-focused initiatives have long been taking place in centres across the state; with a locally driven focus on needs specific to individual communities. These initiatives include localised natural disaster preparedness sessions, as well as initiatives to support those who lose access to critical resources like food in the event of disaster. This place-based approach demonstrates how local communities can play a proactive and locally relevant role in disaster preparedness with their NCCs. See further detailed context in **Appendix G.**

Hambledon House, Cairns – Food Security Project

Hambledon House partnered with Cairns Regional Council, QFES, and Police Service to organise community preparation events. Local residents identified food security as a key concern in their community To address this issue, a community development project was initiated, creating a space where community members could share their stories and concerns. This storytelling and community engagement inspired community members to create of a recipe book of accessible and affordable food; as well as guidance on how to identify and support those in need during disasters.

Community Support Centre Innisfail

Community Support Centre Innisfail (CSCI) is developing a video to inform new community members on the impacts of cyclones and how to better prepare. They will be using the knowledge of the local staff members of CSCI to empower the capacity of the community in the face of disaster.

5.1.4 The Significance of Preparedness to mitigating Response and Recovery Efforts

Adaptation and Flexibility

Queensland's Neighbourhood Centre Sector has a demonstrated history in community and organisational preparedness for monsoon, cyclone, flood, bushfire, drought and more recently in pandemic events. Based on information gathered by NCQ following the rainfall and flooding event that occurred in South East Queensland during February/March 2022, NCCs reported that their preparedness for responding to that event was supported by a range of adaptations acquired through responding to the pandemic.

This data identified how NCCs quickly adapted the way they delivered their services to the community to meet the challenges posed by the restrictions and conditions during that time. These adjustments made in response to the pandemic had a significant impact on the effectiveness of support and connection they were able to offer to their communities during the SEQ Flooding and Rainfall Event, adding a new dimension to their capacity to respond to the needs of their communities during future disaster events.

Increased utilisation of technology was a key adaptation reported by centres through enhancements to and increased utilisation of online and virtual platforms to engage and connect with community members. NCCs not only showed their adaptability to the pandemic through use of technology, many have also further developed their organisational resilience through learnings and reflections.

"If I could have done anything differently [to prepare for the pandemic] I would have upfront invested resources into technology. Unbeknownst to all of us I think technology was such a key thing in the pandemic in regard to how you connected with your community." Brisbane-based Neighbourhood Centre.

Online activity, including increased use of social media had provided a platform for community to receive information on current restrictions and other COVID information from a trusted source. Many centres had also adapted and increased their emergency relief and food provision during COVID using e-vouchers, as well as linking with other services to further connect community members needing food relief. Centres also reported providing support to other organisations through sharing resources and adapting services to be delivered remotely. They also broadened networks and relationships for mobilisation and expansion of supports and further developed organisational preparedness. See further details in **Appendix I.**

This section has explored the many ways NCCs are currently supporting disaster preparedness and awareness of risks and hazards with their communities. It has also highlighted their awareness of the significance of understanding and working with the capacity, resources, infrastructure and social capital embedded in their communities, with the aim of ensuring that those attributes will support a planned approach to the next event.

5.2 Responding to Disaster Events

NCCs across the state and particularly in those areas that regularly experience cyclone and monsoon events, are well versed in responding to the immediate needs of communities as a key role they deliver in disaster events. More recently, increasing events such as the pandemic, bushfire and major flooding, as well as ongoing drought conditions, have impacted communities across a much broader area of the state. NCCs in areas that previously may never have had to mount a response effort have 'stood up' to support their communities and are now preparing for their response to future events.

The NCQ Sector Impact Report 2021-22 showed 88% of NCCs surveyed 'offered information and referral during natural disasters', during which times, NCCs also provided access to digital infrastructure (77%), food relief (72%) and material relief (61%) to disaster-effected community members.[31]

A survey was conducted by NCQ immediately following the rainfall and flood event of February/March 2022 to ascertain what support NCQ could offer and to understand what programs and services were being offered by Centres. Information on their key roles were provided by the 42 centres that responded:

- information and referral services to people impacted by flooding
- material relief
- emergency relief
- emotional support/counselling
- lounge space for peer support
- volunteer coordination (new and existing)
- emergency food distribution
- sourcing emergency housing
- offering refuge and safety

- access to showers and laundry facilities
- access to phone charging, computers and internet
- providing support to other providers
- supporting people to find accommodation, tenancy/legal support, and advice
- had acted as evacuation centres
- Drawing on their local knowledge and partnerships to contact the most vulnerable in their communitiesCollaborating with other local service providers to create a network of support.

> **"There was an evacuation centre set up for people whose homes were flooded, and we helped to look after those people. Our centre was certainly the hub of it all."**
>
> MURILLA COMMUNITY CENTRE

Neighbourhood and Community Centre Community-led Response Case Studies

The proximity to and understanding of local communities enables community-led response efforts to support disaster recovery long after the initial impact to the community. See further detailed context in **Appendix J**.

Emerald Neighbourhood Centre

Emerald Neighbourhood Centre is a crucial part of disaster management and community support, playing an essential role in housing, clothing, food and referrals to partner organisations in response to disasters. Emerald Neighbourhood Centre is one of the primary sources of ongoing support for their local community in disaster recovery.

Community-led Response: January 2011 Brisbane Flood Event

A study of two community-led response and recovery efforts delivered by a well-established NCC and an emerging, unfunded community organisation in the major flooding event in Brisbane in 2011, outlined community leadership, the utilisation of existing community capacity and the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities were key underpinning elements of both of these efforts.[59] Local service groups provided food and water, local business assisted with storage space, a flood recovery committee met for over twelve months post the event and the emerging group acted as a evacuation centre.

The leadership provided by both organisations was a key aspect of both community-led responses, producing strategic approaches to the delivery of their roles and incorporating elements of flexibility to meet the changing needs of the crisis. Supporting this leadership was the participation of a significant local volunteer base who were able to bring a range of capacities to both of these efforts.

5.2.1 The First Port of Call

First responders to disaster events are recognised in the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan (QSDMP) as local government through their Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), supported by Local Recovery Groups which are comprised of key disaster management and response agencies and organisations, as illustrated in **Figure 8** below.[60] As mentioned earlier, the most common and applicable positioning of NCCs within LDMGs exists with the Human and Social Local Recovery Sub-Groups.

Neighbourhood Centres Queensland data detailing the roles played by NCCs in the 2022 flood events was one set of many examples which demonstrate that NCCs are often the first port of call for communities seeking immediate assistance in the wake of an event.

"Neighbourhood Centres are with local communities before the external disaster management services arrive and continue to support communities over the months and years after others leave."

REPEATED COMMENTS FROM MANY NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES.

NCCs typically undertake response efforts utilising the advantage of knowing and understanding their communities, having existing capacity to reach community members, and harnessing local knowledge, local resources and local networks. One example of a NCC proactively working with the disaster management arrangements highlighted they were the only organisation in their area able to support the community in the immediate time of TC Debbie.

"Our LDMG has put out a local disaster management plan which came out since TC Debbie. We were actively on the Human and Social Recovery Sub-Group for both the pandemic and TC Debbie. We did a lot of work as a sub-group. …. When we had TC Debbie, nobody could get in. I am working with [others] to seek some coordination there and working around all these issues. When we did have TC Debbie, the only agency on the ground [from the start] was us."

WHITSUNDAY NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE.

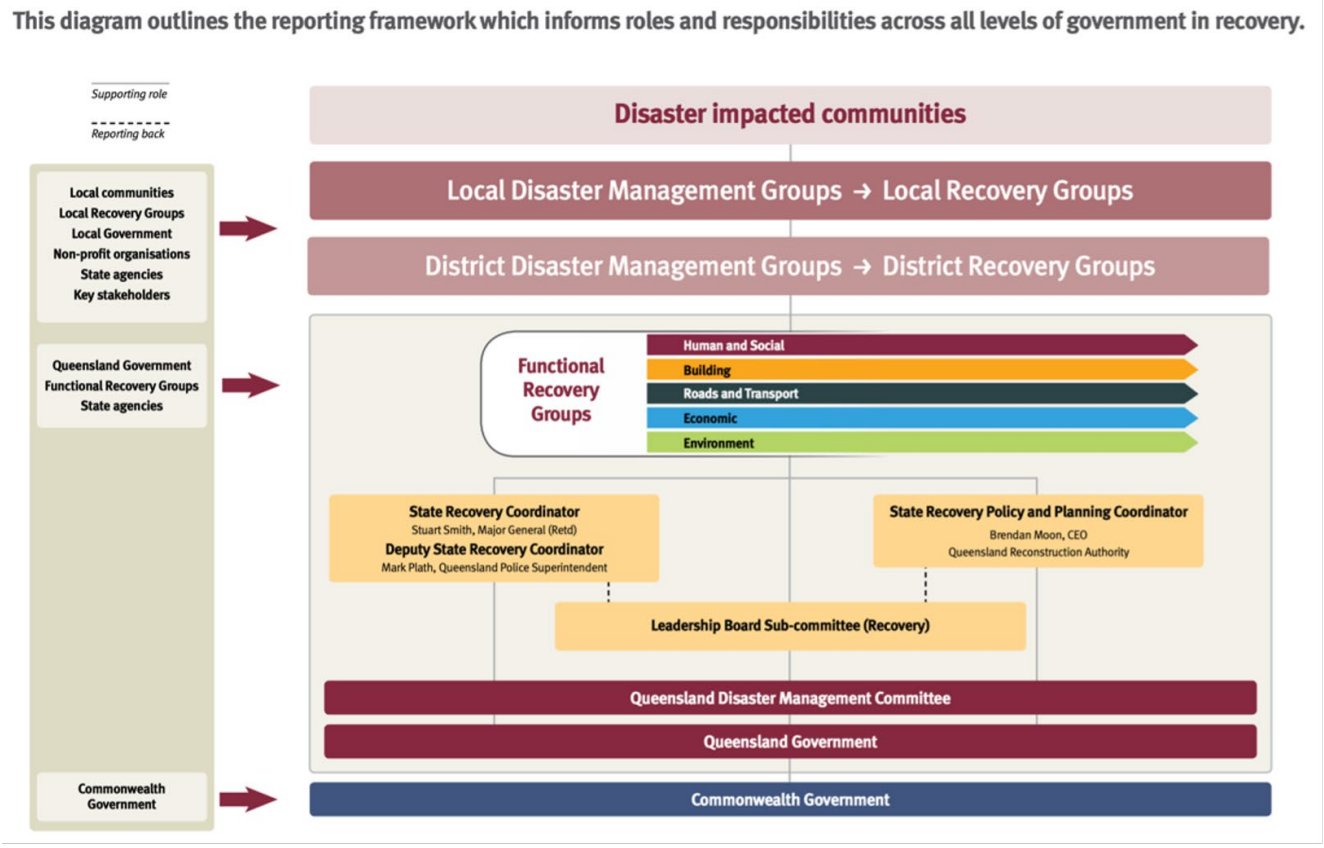
Through coordination with disaster management arrangements, "the Burrum District Community Centre at Howard was able to open as a respite centre in response to a disaster, within only 45 minutes of the request being made".[60]

The case studies outlined in the last section provide examples of how NCCs have been able to provide a major response effort under challenging conditions. Response efforts delivered in a dense urban setting come with their own set of complexities, including communities living in high rise developments, complex road systems and large populations. The Brisbane flood event in 2011 proved to be a significant example of the difficulties of responding to a major event in a large city, without any previous preparation. This event was proportionately larger than the two previous recorded flood events and almost double that of the January 1974 flood.[61] As the brief case study account conveyed, key characteristics of community disaster resilience that featured heavily as part of both place-based responses related to the leadership and community capacity clearly demonstrated by each organisation as they self-organised their efforts in the absence of a formal response from emergency services agencies.

This section has highlighted the significance of community-led responses to disaster events, and the critical roles that NCCs play in coordinating these efforts. The information presented clearly demonstrates the ability of NCCs, working with their communities, to identify and enhance community capacity and connections to respond to the immediate needs of communities impacted by severe weather events, utilising a flexible and creative approach. A significant aspect of this role, yet to be captured in government planning frameworks, is the critical resource that NCCs provide in supporting emergency management response.

FIGURE 8

Roles and Responsibilities across All Levels of Government in Disaster Recovery[60]



DRY
WEATHER

5.3 Recovery and Building Future Resilience

The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (QSDR) highlights the 'narrowing window for preparedness, recovery and learning with simultaneous disaster events' as a key challenge to the recovery phase and the ability of communities to prepare for the next event .[62] The impact of compounding disaster events on community resilience levels has been discussed in this Strategy and has become a key factor in prolonging the recovery phase in many disaster-affected communities.

The Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Monsoon Resilience included an estimate of 18 to 24 months for communities to recover from a monsoon event.[30] Neighbourhood Centres delivering recovery efforts in South East Queensland suggested that community recovery from the flooding event in early 2022 could take up to three years.[64] Anecdotal evidence from discussions with NCCs has also revealed that there has been a delay in people seeking support in many communities. This delay has been attributed to trauma and low levels of resilience, exacerbated by the complexity of the recovery system. Similarly, while drought declarations have now been revoked in many regions, the recovery phase from what been described as the most severe drought in recorded history will no doubt also need to be delivered over a prolonged period.[50]

> **"We're the ongoing role after the emergency services leave. The after care is a big part of a disaster. When it first happens, it's all over the media and there's tonnes of support at the start but when [that support] dissipates to nothing, that change is quite significant."**
>
> ONE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE MANAGER

5.3.1 Recovery: a complex, multilayered process

Recovery support will vary for many communities according to location, demographics and the type and severity of the event. NCCs recognise the complexity of community issues and needs through the recovery phase, which interrelate across social, economic, natural environment and physical factors. The role of NCCs in community recovery, delivered over extended periods, deal with some of the most complex issues that a community may ever have to deal with, particularly where people have lost everything. These roles are also particularly important where people may only have English as a second language and for vulnerable community members, and where trauma is impacting the ability of some sections of the community to cope with their situations.

These recovery roles can include:

- Facilitating the delivery of psychosocial support
- Counselling
- Emergency relief
- Information and referral
- Assisting with navigating and applying for government funding and recovery services such as home buy back schemes
- Providing material relief
- Building connection between community for peer support and to reduce social isolation
- Assistance with finding accommodation
- Providing respite activities for people who are cleaning/rebuilding their homes
- Welfare checks and supporting vulnerable community members
- Assisting with negotiations with insurance companies and government agencies
- Assisting with connections to legal aid
- Financial counselling services

Statistics in the NCQ Sector Impact Report 2021-

22 showed a high proportion of NCC survey respondents to have undertaken the roles illustrated in **Figure 9** during disaster recovery phases.[31]

Perceptions of broader sector agencies and organisations in Brisbane and surrounding areas in 2022 highlighted that NCCs' typically come from a community development framework and view 'individuals as community members rather than service recipients'.[52] This strengthens relationships with their local communities to last beyond the relatively short-term interactions of other service providers.[52] Further to connections made with community members directly, NCCs were referred to as facilitators for people between service providers.[52] Hence, NCCs are aware of vulnerable people within their local community and understand how to appropriately engage with them when affected by disaster events, taking into account broader life circumstances. By working with NCCs, understanding their approach to working with people as 'community members' and valuing their insights about the needs of their community in the response planning process, first responders would be better able to provide adequate and appropriate support to disaster-affected individuals.

Neighbourhood and Community Centre Recovery Case Studies

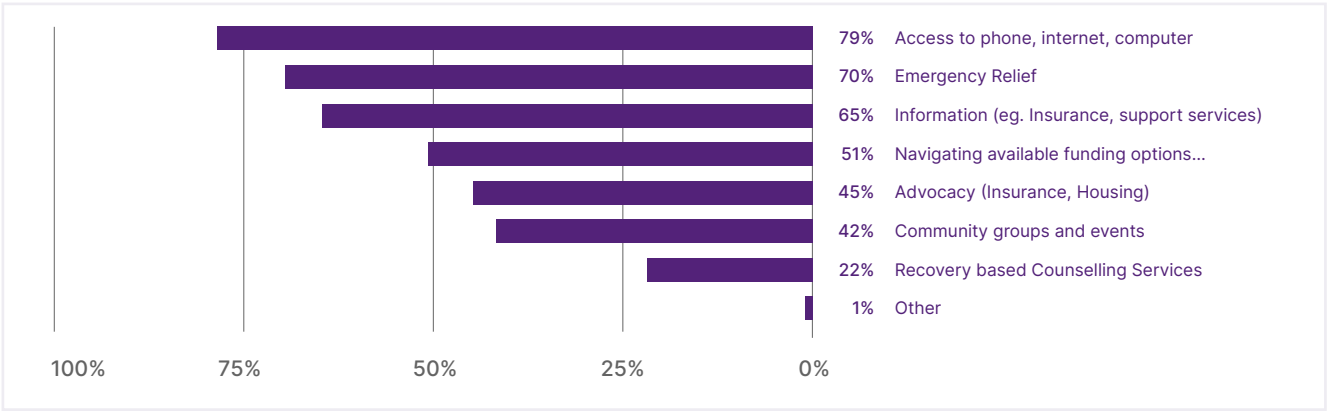
In the event of disasters, NCCs provide a critical central hub for communities in the recovery phase. The physical proximity to the community, as well as the agility of local organisations enables NCCs to act fast and respond to immediate local needs, where state-led and nationally-led efforts can take more time to coordinate due to the scale of the operations. The community-led response efforts demonstrate the integral role NCCs play in recovery.

The Neighbourhood Hub (TN Hub), Mackay

Neighbourhood Centres are often the first point of contact for people during the disaster recovery phase. In 2017, The Neighbourhood Hub "set up a pop-up stall in the Canelands Shopping Centre for two weeks after

FIGURE 9

Percentages of Neighbourhood Centres offering Disaster Recovery supports & services



Cyclone Debbie crossed. During that time, we helped community members to connect with their insurance companies and to access funding through Community Recovery." The TN Hub general manager explained to further emphasize the long-term role NCCs have played in disaster recovery, "this had already been a role that the Centre played following flooding in 2008, the bushfire events in 2018 and during the pandemic".

Laidley Community Centre

Project Galvanise, led by the Laidley Community Centre, was designed to deliver a suite of responses requested by the community affected by the 2019/2020 bushfires and ongoing drought to address barriers to service access and increase the ability of residents to access mental health services.

> **"The project included employing local workers to link residents to appropriate supports, share services information and bridge the gap between farmers and agencies. In addition to individual support, we delivered activities identified by residents to reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing outcomes for this vulnerable community**
>
> LAIDLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE MANAGER

By encouraging social connectivity, Project Galvanise has strengthened future capacity for grassroots disaster response and recovery.

Community Plus Yeronga Neighbourhood Centre

During the time when Community Plus Yeronga Community Centre was functioning as a flood recovery centre, they connected with an uninsured family of four from Rocklea who had been severely affected by the floods. The family was of a CALD background, had two university student children, and a father/husband with health issues. The centre provided them with meals, Red Cross grants, grocery vouchers, fresh fruits and vegetables, and also connected them with a property developer's donation via Rotary Stones Corner. They further supported the family with their application for Resilient Homes Fund, connected them with the Rotary Australia World Community Service grant and Red Cross Hardship funding. The centre continued to assist the family even after the initial support by providing them with assistance in submitting a successful appeal for their home assessment outcome. See further detailed context in **Appendix K.**

5.3.2 Making a Resilient Recovery

The impact disaster events can have on the wellbeing, health and economic situation of many, often requires years of ongoing assistance. However, the recovery phase can also be utilised as an opportunity to review and to learn from disaster experiences to enhance risk reduction and prepare for future events. Following the impacts of recent years, many NCCs are now working to develop a range of community-led recovery and preparation models. These are aimed at increasing awareness in hazard prone areas of their communities, enhancing connections between residents to increase social networks and support, and to ensure that vulnerable people are included in welfare checks and supported with home preparation and planning around evacuation.

In the face of community disaster fatigue, an escalation in the incidence of mental health issues, domestic

violence and homelessness, as well as the demands of supporting the community through the complexity of accessing government and corporate recovery support, the recovery role played by NCCs at the local level has become significantly more complex. From an organisational perspective, as a key learning from their own experiences with disaster events, many NCCs are now recognising the criticality of reviewing their organisational capacity. This reflection has included the upskilling of providing specialist training for staff and volunteers in areas such as trauma informed care and the management of spontaneous volunteers.[51] Building stronger networks and connections with other service providers has been mentioned previously as a key element of the capacity of NCCs to assist community to access broader support. This is now particularly significant to meet increasing demand on NCCs in recovery situations.

5.3.3 Conclusion

In outlining the role that NCCs play in assisting with the recovery of their communities following disaster events, this section has sought to provide an understanding of the complexities that this brings, both for the community and therefore for NCCs. The reports from NCCs in different areas of the state who are still currently delivering recovery efforts have reported varying evaluations of where their communities sit on the recovery spectrum, with some centres experiencing high demand for support, other areas noticing the reluctance of people to move forward to seek assistance and in some rural areas, a persistent culture of not seeking help.

This section has also sought to demonstrate the breadth of the role that NCCs play in the recovery phase, reflecting the diverse needs of impacted communities and the significance of the support that NCCs provide over extended periods of time to assist people to restart lives and livelihoods and to be better prepared in the future.

6. Strategic Priorities

This section responds to the second research question:

> 'How can NCCs be supported to more effectively build community disaster resilience?'

This strategy recommends actions prioritising 4 strategic pillars:

PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	PRIORITY 4
Raise Awareness & Recognition	**Strengthen Relationships & Collaboration**	**Influence Policy & Shape Funding**	**Learning & Development**

The relevance and implementation of the 4 strategic priorities will vary for each Neighbourhood Centre, depending on the following:

Needs of the community and geographical location

Neighbourhood Centres are the place-based access point to support services for local communities. Their core operation is shaped and guided by local community needs. Geographical location influences the interests, needs and strengths of the community. The comparative remoteness also impacts the demographic, living conditions, and access to basic needs and services.

Funding

Funding plays a significant role in NCCs' capacity to meet their community's needs and demands. It affects the number of staff, the types of services that the Centre can deliver, the type and quantity of material aid that can be made available and much more.

Familiarity with disaster events and management

Several factors impact the level of a Neighbourhood Centre's familiarity with disaster management. These include whether the community has experienced a bushfire or other disasters, whether disaster management is part of the local Neighbourhood Centre's core operation or business continuity plan, and other local organisations' role in bushfire response.

Existing partnerships with Local Disaster Management Group and local organisations

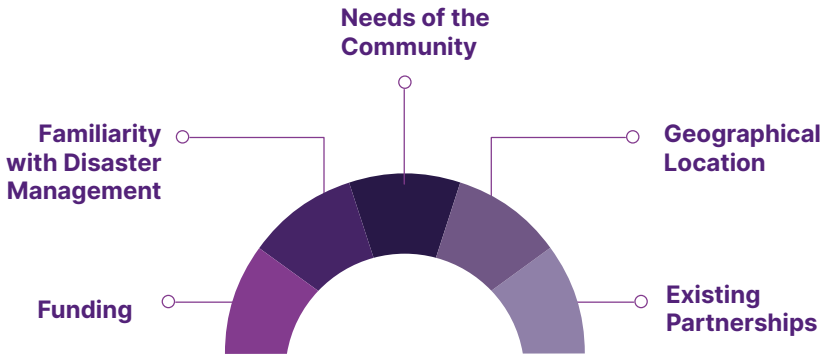
A Neighbourhood Centre's longevity can play a role in the strength of existing local partnerships with the LDMG, namely the Human and Social Recovery Group (HSRG) and broader local organisations; however, it is not the only determinant. Some NCCs may have been operating for several decades yet only have limited local partnerships, while younger NCCs may have built strong partnerships. Sometimes the occurrence of a natural disaster can also 'jumpstart' the collaborative relationships in disaster management. [51]

Factors impacting NCCs capacity in disaster-related work

Every Neighbourhood Centre's is unique, with diverse service offerings and resource capacity. Each NCC will need to implement these strategies according to their priorities while also recognising that support from the community and disaster management sector is also needed.[51]

FIGURE 10

Factors impacting NCCs capacity in disaster-related work



6.1 Strategic Priorities

The work of NCCs at the local level is closely aligned with the vision and goals outlined in the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2022-2027 (QSDR). The criticality of preparedness, emphasised as a key element of the QSDR, identifies the need to increase community understanding of hazards and risks and for the development of person-centred emergency preparedness and community-based resilience plans.[62] Additionally, the QSDR makes a commitment to enhancing risk reduction and capacity building programs, and specifically recognises the value of locally led and community-based solutions to the impacts of disasters.[62]

The vision and goals stated in the QSDR are supported by the role played by NCCs in disaster-related situations. The NCC sector's strategic approach offers clarity and ambition of a greater part to play in the goal of stronger, safer, and more resilient communities by addressing the possibilities and problems that have been recognised.

The following four strategic priorities have been identified through collaboration with NCCs and broader stakeholders. See also **Appendix L** for a matrix outlining a range of initiatives towards disaster resilience that occur across all levels of the NCCs sector.

PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	PRIORITY 4
Raise Awareness & Recognition	**Strengthen Relationships & Collaboration**	**Influence Policy & Shape Funding**	**Learning & Development**
Raise awareness and recognition of the role, value and capacity of NCCs in the disaster management system supporting disaster-affected communities.	Strengthen relationships towards greater collaboration of NCCs within the disaster management sector; and relationships towards greater inclusion of community members in all stages of disasters.	Influence policy and shape funding models to enhance funding arrangements to NCCs for place-based and community-led disaster recovery and resilience.	Foster and strengthen place-based learning and development to support disaster-affected communities through the complexities and compounding nature of disasters.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Raise Awareness and Recognition

Raise awareness and recognition of the role, value and capacity of NCCs in the disaster management system, supporting disaster-affected communities.

"Natural disasters have changed, and it has become clear to us that the nation's disaster management arrangements must also change."[1]

Within the NCC sector, there is a widespread desire to enhance cross-organisational communication, collaboration and organisational capacity through training and funding opportunities and to be more effectively utilised as a stakeholder in the disaster management sector. With the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, broad research and lived experiences of disasters have highlighted the relevance and value of place-based and community-led approaches to be utilised, which are core strengths of the work of NCCs.

> "We need to be looking at the neighbourhood centres' stories"
>
> BENARRAWA NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Many NCCs are already delivering on key aspects of the vision outlined in the QSDR as key social infrastructure supported by Queensland State Government funding. Earlier sections of this Strategy have emphasised the scope of work carried out, emphasising the importance of a local presence and the place-based character of NCCs work to boost community disaster resilience. Due to a variety of factors impacting NCCs' capacity to undertake disaster-related activity (see **Figure 10**), challenges must be addressed in order to meet the requirements and expectations of community members and the disaster management sector more effectively.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Queensland State Disaster Management Plan (QSDMP) assigns the primary responsibility for managing disaster events in their areas to Local Government, positioning Councils with the management of all stages of disaster management through Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs).[60] The Plan also requires LDMGs to approach this work through a lens of shared responsibility between stakeholders, underpinned by consultation, participation and collaboration.[60]

The place-based and community-led work of NCCs support a local level focus to disaster management processes. NCCs understand the benefits to be gained through working closely with LDMGs in all phases of disaster management, and particularly in preparedness and response. However, engagement with NCCs across the state has identified two major challenges to the participation and utilisation of the roles delivered by NCCs as part of this arrangement.

> "One thing you find particularly with neighbourhood centres is a really strong, long-term workforce. Often with other services it's like a revolving door of staff, so they miss out on having those people who are able to build long, stable connections and relationships with the community. I think that makes a huge difference."
>
> BARINGA COMMUNITY CENTRE

The first of these challenges is an inconsistency in the strength of relationships between local Councils and NCCs across the state. NCQ internal survey data has indicated that NCCs operating in the north of the

state are far more likely to experience a strong working relationship with their LDMG. This may be driven by the occurrence and severity of extreme weather events historically experienced in Queensland's north and far northern areas, and the opportunities this has provided NCCs to build recognition with their Councils of the support they can offer. However, the degree of engagement and collaboration between NCCs and their Councils fluctuates across other areas of the state.

Rural and remote NCCs are more likely to have informal but effective relationships. Where NCCs are operated by local government, these are also well resourced and supported.

Neighbourhood Centres operating in South-East Queensland reportedly experience the lowest level of involvement with their local Councils. For example, most NCCs operating in the Brisbane local government area have reported little or no relationship with their Council's Disaster Management Team since 2011. While some centres are now being approached following the release of Council's flood review report, it would appear that there is a lack of understanding of the potential for NCCs to support with disaster management in these areas.

Those NCCs who have a collaborative relationship with their LDMG report being able to work with them and with other disaster management agencies to deliver preparedness activities for community members. To various degrees, NCCs are represented on their LDMG's Human and Social Recovery Groups (HSRGs). Some are included as participants in scenario planning exercises. The strength of working relationships between NCCs and the LDMGs organisational structures, primarily HSRGs, can be crucial to coordinate connections, participation and support with communities at the local level. Where strong working relationships are not evident, key objectives of the QSDMP are less likely to be deliverable, increasing risk and reducing the opportunity for realising the objectives of the QSDMP.

> **"I think we're just small, and [the authorities] don't fully understand who we are and what we do. It's unfortunate that these larger organisations have a higher profile than us. We don't have the staffing to make the PR capacity and raise that awareness."**
>
> MAROOCHY NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

The second, compounding challenge lies with information from some NCCs of their uncertainty of how to firstly, gauge their organisational capacity to assist the LDMG, and secondly, how to engage with and appropriately communicate that information. The capacity for collaboration of individual NCCs with their Council will vary according to a range of factors. From state to local levels, a challenge exists in terms of how NCCs' roles can be articulated to the broader sectors 'whilst maintaining their diversity'.[52] These can include the staffing level of a NCC, the number and capacity of volunteers, as well as the level of community demand being met by a centre on a daily basis. These issues can impact on a Centre's ability to attend meetings, to host preparedness workshops, or their capacity to provide varying levels of response efforts. However, the ability of NCCs to identify and articulate what they can realistically offer as part of a working relationship with LDMGs is important information to inform the delivery of disaster management arrangements.

Some NCCs have indicated their attempts to connect with their local Human and Social Recovery Sub-Group have had minimal response and have shown there to be a lack of understanding, from some Councils, of the roles that NCCs play in disaster resilience and how NCCs' role can support the LDMG to deliver their responsibilities.

Wider research further highlights the need for community organisations, namely neighbourhood centres, to be resourced and included as key local players in formal disaster management networks and at all phases of the emergency management cycle.[64] These challenges highlight the need for greater communication to raise awareness across the disaster management sector of NCCs role and value through a realistic lens of NCCs' organisational scope and challenges.

Overall, the greatest outcome of this strategic priority is greater opportunities for robust communication of NCCs roles, value and capacity to be well understood and incorporated for the long-term benefit of the disaster management sector and impacted communities. Greater awareness and recognition of place-based NCC's in disaster affected communities will lead to affected communities having greater knowledge about where to seek support at a local level.

Theory of Change:

NCCs Strategic approach to raising awareness and recognition

If we....	By (NCCs/Local Level Actions)	By (NCQ with NCC Sector)	Then (Medium Term Impact)	So (Long Term Impact)
Raise awareness and recognition of the role, value and capacity of NCCs in disaster resilience.	▪ Raising awareness of individual NCC's in supporting local community to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. ▪ Communications with community members, funding bodies, community organisations, government and disaster management groups, particularly LDMG's. ▪ Raising awareness about the up-to-date needs of the community, particularly the most vulnerable. ▪ Raising the community's awareness and recognition of disasters and how to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.	▪ Raising awareness across QLD of NCC's supporting their communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. ▪ Communications with government, funding bodies, DR stakeholders and community sector. ▪ Raising awareness about the up-to-date needs of different disaster-affected centres and their communities ▪ Working with Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (ANHCA) to build national-level relationships and inter-state research.	▪ Potential funding bodies, community organisations, government departments and disaster management groups will better understand the role and value of NCCs. ▪ Collaboration and coordination with NCC's increase to access their local knowledge and insights and achieve better disaster resilience outcomes. ▪ Community members have increased opportunity to share experiences and inform local level disaster planning.	▪ Robust communication and collaboration is embedded between NCC's, community members, community organisations, government and the broader disaster management sector. ▪ Communities are supported and strengthened in their disaster resilience.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Strengthen Relationships and Collaboration

Strengthen relationships towards greater collaboration of NCCs within the disaster management sector; and relationships towards greater inclusion of community members in all stages of disasters.

"Disasters will inevitably produce calls for responsiveness, but an effective response is unlikely to happen without collaboration."[65]

The development of functional relationships and effective collaboration across stakeholder groups operating in disaster management arrangements, and the inclusion of community members, particularly those most vulnerable, is critical in supporting communities impacted by disaster events.

A cross-sector collaborative approach has been recognised internationally and nationally with evidence of notable downfalls of traditional systems to respond to major disaster events. Consequently, there has been recognition that the response to disaster situations cannot be addressed by the resources of a single agency.[62,66-69]

Purposeful initial engagement is important for the establishment of conditions to support the process of collaboration of NCCs with the broader disaster management system, including local community members, such as people of First Nations, multicultural backgrounds, disability and those facing financial hardship.[6,7,12,20,28,70,71]

Greater recognition of NCCs role and value in supporting disaster-affected communities through a cross-sectoral collaborative approach would lead to a range of benefits.

Such benefits include:

- strengthening of disaster management capacity through the development of mutual goals across the sectors
- building key relationships between stakeholders to create a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
- strengthened connections and approaches towards community-led planning and initiatives
- increased opportunities for information and resource sharing during disasters improved coordination and functionality of disaster management systems.[12,28,68,70]

As a defining feature of a disaster-resilient community, inter-organisational networks are closely aligned with community capacity, self-organisation, social support, sense of community and the effectiveness of response and recovery efforts. Many NCCs have expressed interest yet concerns about difficulties in establishing and maintaining meaningful memberships of disaster-related networks. Some challenges raised relate to availability of time and limited staff with funding scope in their roles, as well as the level of ongoing commitment that may be required to maintain productive participation in inter-organisational networks.

Regional NCC Networks exist across Queensland to share information, connections, support, ideas and resources. These networks also play an important role in developing collective knowledge through shared observations of social trends and to increase opportunities for collaboration across the regions.

Overall, the greatest outcome of this strategic priority is to strengthen relationships and collaboration with NCCs and the disaster management sector to provide efficient and coordinated support to disaster affected communities. A fully functioning, networked system of disaster response, incorporating NCC's, will ensure that communities are fully supported at the local level to strengthen disaster resilience and recover from an event as quickly as possible.

Theory of Change:

Neighbourhood and Community Centres strategic approach to strengthen relationships and collaboration

If we....	By (NCCs/Local Level Actions)	By (NCQ with NCC Sector)	Then (Medium Term Impact)	So (Long Term Impact)
Strengthen relationships and collaboration of NCCs within the disaster management sector; and build relationships towards greater inclusion of community, particularly vulnerable people.	▪ Strengthening local voice through community member inclusion (particularly those most vulnerable) in disaster planning processes. ▪ Co-hosting community disaster preparedness activities with disaster management services and organisations, particularly for those most vulnerable and marginalised. ▪ Actively engaging with, and/or seek NCC membership on, Human Social Recovery Sub-Groups. ▪ Participating in HSRGs and local-level networks for disaster planning. ▪ Ensuring key organisations are aware of the role their local NCC plays in disasters and are included in referral networks/pathways.	▪ Further development of the NCC Sector Disaster Resilience Working Group to inform contributions to the State Human Social Recovery Group (SHSRG). ▪ Strengthening regional networks of NCCs to enable regional-level connections, collaboration, peer support and resources and skills sharing, such as mapping skills and supports at the regional level. ▪ Identifying opportunities to work with key disaster management sector stakeholders at state and national level (as per a systems map to be developed) ▪ Generating opportunities for cross-sector collaborative environment and system.	▪ NCC community-led and disaster management sector activities and approaches are proactively connected and coordinated. ▪ Clear plans in place at local and regional level, with clear communication pathways and understanding of role, resources and capacity of key players. ▪ Reduced duplication and stress in response and recovery phase.	▪ Rapid mobilisation and coordination of community and state-level stakeholders during disasters minimising confusion and duplication. ▪ Efficient and coordinated support for communities and individuals. ▪ Core skills, connections and expertise of NCCs are widely understood and incorporated into disaster systems and processes.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Influence Policy & Shape Funding

Influence policy and shape funding models to enhance funding arrangements to NCCs for place-based and community-led disaster recovery and resilience.

"Managing disaster risk and resilience will require a greater focus on managing the factors that contribute to them and, in particular, those factors over which we have some control."[1]

Major challenges have been widely felt over recent years, with COVID-19 compounding natural disasters such as bushfires, flooding and drought. The resilience of communities has been impacted by these events, reflected in the increase in domestic violence, homelessness and financial stress presenting as issues through NCCs. With the rising societal pressures occurring partly as impacts of disasters, greater resourcing to organisations who provide supports is required. As emphasised by mental health study on disaster resilience, 'Local assets [such as NCCs] play a vital role in building resilience and wellbeing in the aftermath of bushfires, floods and other disasters. Yet their role is often under-recognised and under-funded within the wider disaster recovery ecosystem'.[72]

In discussions with NCCs through the development of this strategy, Neighbourhood Centres Queensland have heard repeated concerns about the short-term timeframes of recovery funding. Centres are increasingly known to be the only, or one of a few, local organisations left to support communities after the first recovery phase, which can last over five years after the event. Another concern raised has been the degree to which reporting requirements increase with additional funding, whereby staffing capacity often becomes a barrier to obtaining such funds.

Through Queensland Recovery, the State Government has provided a range of supports for communities and resources to organisations, including NCCs, that operate in recovery roles after events. One example was recovery funding to NCCs for the February-March 2022 flooding event in the South East, after NCCs had been initially operating without additional funding in the immediate aftermath of the event. Neighbourhood Centres appreciate the recognition shown by the State Government through an increased injection of recovery funds to support Neighbourhood Centres. Feedback from many of these NCCs highlighted areas for further development of the current system for funding NCCs to deliver recovery roles operating in disaster-impacted areas. One issue related to the creation of competition between NCCs, particularly those operating in the same local government area. Additional feedback was that while the application round for Disaster Recovery Grants was welcomed by the sector, NCCs reported the arduous amount of time required to complete an application, exacerbated by repetitive questioning at a time where these NCCs were facing significant community demand. Another issue raised was the lack of communication that particular funding rounds and Standing Offer Arrangements (SOA) for the recovery stage had been opened.

Neighbourhood Centre representatives indicated the Standing Offer Arrangements (SOA) in the Recovery funding regime for organisations to seek inclusion on the Queensland Government DCHDE procurement panel

"Community Centres need more funding. In a disaster like this, we're 100% ready to go in an instant, but we still have people coming through the door who need our regular services. These might be people who are sleeping rough or having substance abuse issues among many other things. The work... doesn't just stop."

YERONGA COMMUNITY CENTRE

provide services as a Recovery Hub, were beyond the time capacity of the majority of NCCs to complete.

The QCOSS State of the Sector Report 2022 was informed by representatives across the social sector who reported that "disaster funding is often provided on a reactive basis after an event occurs, making it difficult to use the money thoughtfully and effectively".[73]

A review of processes and timeframes for the delivery of SOAs would enhance NCCs capacity to obtain vital funds to continue operations during both the short and long-term phases of disaster recovery. Importantly, NCCs have identified the need within the funding regimes to generate greater equity of funding distribution between NCCs and the large NGOs.

Overall, the opportunity to influence policy and co-design funding frameworks in the interests of community recovery would be most welcomed by the NCC sector. Efficient and bespoke funding delivered to place-based NCC's will ensure that local communities can be immediately responded to in the event of a disaster and in a manner that is conducive to rapid recovery in unique localities.

"Our little centre can trace the impact of disaster on our community. Our old normal disappeared with the receding flood waters of 2019. In its wake, our new normal is showing in our dataset as 17 times the volume of clients we used to service, without any extra staff or infrastructure. That is a 1,600 percent increase and that is a permanent shift, except that now the temporary workers who have allowed us to do all of that work have left because there is no funding for a second worker for the centre."

NORTH TOWNSVILLE COMMUNITY HUB

Theory of Change:

Neighbourhood and Community Centres strategic approach to influence policy and shape funding

If we....	By (NCCs/Local Level Actions)	By (NCQ with NCC Sector)	Then (Medium Term Impact)	So (Long Term Impact)
Influence policy and shape funding programs to increase funding and streamline dissemination to NCCs for community-led disaster recovery and resilience.	▪ Providing evidence of past experiences where funding models have prevented recovery and resilience. ▪ Building relationships to enable co-design of funding programs that support place-based community-led initiatives. ▪ NCC's involvement in policy development to support disaster recovery in their local community.	▪ Influencing policy on recovery funding arrangements to support place-based community-led initiatives. ▪ Continuing to strengthen relationships to inform future shaping of the Community Recovery funding and offer co-design support for the Category C Qld Recovery initiative. ▪ Further developing working relationships with funders to work with NCCs in adopting greater understanding of local-level experiences to further shape funding models and proposals for procurement reform E.g. SOAs.	▪ NCCs would increase organisational capacity to upskill and employ staff to address needs of disaster affected community members. ▪ Funders would achieve value for money through the benefits of NCCs strengths of strong local relationships and connections, knowledge of local experiences and greater support for local economy. ▪ Place based community-led responses to disasters are enhanced in local communities.	▪ Funding is disseminated quickly and efficiently to NCC's supporting communities affected by disaster. ▪ Local communities will recover in an effective manner and become more resilient. ▪ NCCs organisationally are more resilient with less risk of staff and volunteer burnout. ▪ The disaster sector would be strengthened through the enhancement of place-based community-led approaches.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Learning and Development

Foster and strengthen place-based learning and development to support disaster-affected communities through the complexities and compounding nature of disasters.

"Every enterprise is a learning and teaching institution. Training and development must be built into it on all levels – training and development that never stops."[85]

As key stakeholders supporting communities through all stages of disasters, NCCs are threads of the fabric of their communities. In contrast to the transient nature of the role of other stakeholders such as Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and state agencies, place-based organisations experience the events with their communities. While this shared experience provides NCCs an understanding of community needs and impacts, it also allows NCCs to gain critical insights into how their organisation performed at an operational level. As a fundamental element of disaster resilience, preparation for future events can be supported through informed reflection by NCCs and their community connections to identify areas that require enhancement. Ensuring the continuity of a NCCs' ability to support their communities in future events has therefore been identified as a major focus area. As part of this, the upskilling of both paid staff and volunteers has also been a major theme raised by NCCs, and importantly, the ability to retain trained staff between events.

Disaster Ready Organisations

A skilled workforce has been identified by NCCs as important for their ability to provide informed support to communities impacted by disaster and to build disaster resilience. It is important to note that specific skill levels are required for applications to the State Government's Standing Offer Arrangements (SOA) to be considered as a supplier for operation as a Recovery Centre.

Representatives of Neighbourhood Centres indicated the following training topics to be of highest importance to the effective delivery of their roles in supporting disaster-affected communities: trauma informed care, psychosocial first aid, understanding the phases of recovery, food handling safety and spontaneous volunteer management. NCCs have reported one major challenge to the delivery of training, apart from sourcing funding for training procurement, is NCCs need for flexibility, particularly in terms of access from regional and remote locations and timing of delivery to work around peak hours of community response work.

Overall, the greatest outcome of this strategic priority is to increase opportunities for NCCs to strengthen knowledge and skills through training, peer learning and shared resources. This NCC sector development would strengthen the disaster management sector, upskill and care for its workforce and support community members through the complexities and compounding nature of disasters.

Theory of Change:

NCCs Strategic approach to learning and development

If we....	By (NCCs/Local Level Actions)	By (NCQ with NCC Sector)	Then (Medium Term Impact)	So (Long Term Impact)
Foster and strengthen place-based learning and development to support disaster-affected communities.	▪ Building organisational knowledge in disaster resilience so the NCC can continually improve support to their local community. ▪ Peer learning through sharing and documenting learnings and local approaches. ▪ Business continuity planning of disaster knowledge and relationships, including with LDMGs (HSRSGs). ▪ Developing local practice frameworks for responding to disaster, including community workshops in disaster resilience (community-led approaches).	▪ Developing NCC peer learning circles and promote stories of practice. ▪ Developing the Online Resource Hub for NCCs to increase sharing, peer learning and work efficiency. Online Resources include: templates E.g., Policies and Procedures, Business Continuity Planning, Case Studies, Training Modules, Funding information, ▪ Volunteer management documents, Research and Evaluation guides. ▪ Assisting NCC's to better understand Qld Disaster Management Arrangements. ▪ Further developing a NCC disaster resilience working group that identifies learning and development needs.	▪ NCC workforce is better equipped to respond to disasters at the local level. ▪ NCCs will have shared bodies of knowledge, learning and practice in times of disaster, including place-based participatory approaches. ▪ NCCs will strengthen organisationally through the sharing of resources and peer support. ▪ Opportunities for further learning and development are identified and actioned.	▪ Communities are supported for rapid response to the complexities and compounding nature of disasters. ▪ The disaster management sector is strengthened through the upskilled workforce of the NCC sector. ▪ NCCs have longevity of knowledge and resources through the NCQ Online Resource Hub. ▪ NCC's have a robust disaster resilience workforce and minimal staff turnover.

7. Conclusion

This Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience has aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the roles played by NCCs in disaster resilience. The literature, data, case studies and shared experiences of NCCs have demonstrated the significant role NCCs play in building community disaster resilience in Queensland. It has highlighted the NCCs contributions to the disaster management system through adaptable, placed-based community work. This Strategy also highlights the significant commitment of NCCs to support and work with local communities through all types and stages of disasters for the long-term.

This Strategy has explored how NCCs can be supported to more effectively build community disaster resilience. The four priority strategies provide guidance for the NCC sector in Queensland to address challenges such as organisational capacity, community inclusion and cross-sectoral collaboration. These strategies encapsulate NCCs' aspirations to strengthen awareness and recognition of their roles and value; and enhance their existing strengths in relationships and collaborations. In combination with policy influence, shaped funding and increased learning and development, the scope for community-led approaches to grow and integrate with formalised disaster management arrangements can be positively expanded. These four priority strategies have been collectively formed to support long-term development of the NCC sector, while retaining and capitalising on the key attributes that the place-based organisational strength of NCCs can provide to the disaster management system.

As an unpredictable climate and the increasing occurrence and severity of disaster events continues to place an enormous strain on the emergency and disaster management sector, the role played by NCCs becomes more critical, not only through the short and long-term phases of recovery, but also in supporting communities in preparedness and response. Looking forward to a future formal review of the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements, NCCs would welcome an integrated approach that recognises the community connections and collaborative opportunities through the Neighborhood and Community Centre sector as a formal stakeholder in the disaster management system, including consideration of adequate resourcing of NCCs to continue to support disaster-affected communities into the future.

Looking to the future, the implementation of this Strategy by the NCC sector, and subsequent support from the disaster management sector, will provide significant contributions towards stronger inter-relationships, collaboration and robust systems to support disaster-affected communities.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Glossary

Disaster

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011) defines a disaster as: A serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community and/or damage to property which is beyond the day-to-day capacity of the prescribed statutory authorities, and which requires special mobilisation and organisation of resources other than those normally available to those authorities.[17]

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of such hazards in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.[74]

Place-based

'Place-based approaches are collaborative, long-term approaches to build thriving communities delivered in a defined geographic location. This approach is ideally characterised by partnering and shared design, shared stewardship, and shared accountability for outcomes and impacts.'[3]

Community-led

In alignment with the National Principles for Disaster Recovery, 'successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward'.[75]Community-led approaches 'acknowledge that disaster-affected people and communities will understand their own needs and capabilities better than those coming in from outside the community, and that they have a right to make choices and decisions about their own recovery.'[56]

Community Development (CD Qld)

There are diverse definitions and frameworks of community development. 'Elements of the method of community development practice are about moving from a private concern to public action through citizen-led activity. It is a relationship-based method underpinned by guiding principles'.[76]

Cross Sectoral Collaboration

A cross sectoral collaborative approach has been described as 'the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately'.[77] A defining feature of the concept of cross sector collaboration is the striving for outcomes that meet the mutual goals of the stakeholders. The structures that underpin this approach can be variable, 'from informal and episodic activity, such as onetime taskforces, to highly formalised contracts between organisations'.[68]

Appendix B. Research Methodology

Qualitative Research Design

The research undertaken for developing the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience has utilised two distinct methods aimed at gathering data, data analysis and strategy development. A literature review has been undertaken to inform the evidence base on the role that Neighbourhood Centres play in building community disaster resilience. Resilience-based approaches in Queensland and Federal Government emergency management frameworks have also been reviewed, exploring the roles and relationships of the neighbourhood centre sector in relation to the disaster management sector.

The gathering of supporting data has been undertaken using a number of qualitative approaches. Participatory Action Research, defined as an approach that is 'characterised by the active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge... that leads to individual, collective, and or social change' has been utilised as a key method.[78] The active participation of both the researcher as well as the research participants in this method recognises that the participants are knowledgeable regarding their own social realities. In line with this methodology, the development of this Strategy has embedded the participation of Neighbourhood Centres across Queensland, as well as the participation of other key stakeholders from the disaster management sector and government agencies.

A series of three online facilitated conversations were held with representatives from eight NCCs located across the state, exploring their experiences dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and with other compounding disasters, including discussion around the challenges and opportunities associated with those experiences. Participants also workshopped the three sets of strategies contained in each of the existing Strategy documents on monsoon, drought and bushfire resilience to identify key themes to be considered in the development of this overarching Strategy. Those strategies were co-designed with NCC representatives in each of the geographic areas specific to each type of disaster event. The pre-existing strategies were therefore significant in testing their continued relevance and impact in supporting the role of NCCs in building community disaster resilience, particularly in the face of compounding disaster events experienced over the past three years.

A range of additional discussions aimed to inform and refine the development of approaches to enhance NCCs capacity and capability have been held with NCCs throughout the development of the Strategy.

These sessions were supplemented with a series of case studies gathered from Centres across the state. Case study research is a social research method using a qualitative approach .[79] Helen Simons (2015) views the purpose of case study method as a means to 'generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), program, policy institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action' .[80] The case study interviews were designed to support an understanding of the best practice models of community disaster resilience being delivered by neighbourhood centres and the challenges or opportunities that have influenced the inception and development of these.

A series of semi-structured in-depth interviews involving representatives from NCCs across the state also explored the role played by individual centres responding to place-based disaster resilience issues. This semi-structured interview method was also utilised to include representatives from the Disaster Management sector, exploring their perspectives on the role of community organisations in response, recovery and preparedness efforts, as well as their involvement with these Centres as part of disaster events. These inter-

views purposely allowed for a more flexible discussion that is responsive to emergent issues. This has been important in providing an avenue for the participants to share their stories, experiences and perspectives.

Qualitative and quantitative data has also been gathered through a series of surveys undertaken by NCQ with its membership. These surveys have been structured as part of NCQs annual research program, as well as in response to the impacts of recent disaster events.

A face-to-face workshop was held in Brisbane in September 2022 attended by representatives from 13 NCCs from across the state and six key stakeholders who provided in-depth feedback on the challenges experienced and opportunities for NCCs.

Data Collection and Analysis

Online facilitated discussions and semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim into text for analysis, ensuring that participants' views, experiences and feelings were accurately represented in their own words. Following the interviews with the research participants, it was critical to ensure that the experiences of the case study and interview participants were explored and interpreted in a way that would convey an understanding of the experiences of neighbourhood centres and the other key stakeholder groups. The interview content from disaster management sector representatives has been important in capturing the views from the sector, particularly on their perspectives of how neighbourhood centres could be better utilised within the system. The extensive data collected as part of the Neighbourhood Centres Disaster Resilience Workshop where participants provided feedback on the proposed strategic themes was documented and analysed.

Data analysis has sought to identify key themes relating to the delivery of preparedness, response and recovery efforts, challenges, opportunities, initiatives and adaptations that formed the basis of discussions with all participant groups to inform the development of the strategic priorities.

The final stage included a review of the Strategic Priorities by the NCCs disaster resilience working group members.

Appendix C. Disaster Resilience Frameworks: Global, National and State

A growing recognition of the importance of building disaster resilience and a focus on risk reduction over the past decade has seen the development and review of frameworks and policy documents addressing these issues. The United Nations Hyogo Framework (2005) was the first plan to outline a resilience-based approach to disaster management, with a review of this document and a commitment to building resilience to disasters adopted in March 2015 (Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction).[81]

This document lists four priority action areas considered for focus across sectors. These are:

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk.

Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk.

Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.[74]

The framework outlined in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) 17 places emphasis on community disaster resilience, advocating for collective responsibility across government, business, the non-government sector, and individuals. The NSDR acknowledges that 'non-government and community organisations are at the forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia' , urging individuals to seek support from, and involvement with, community organisations in planning and preparation.[17] The NSDR provides a description of what a disaster resilient community might look like, as well as suggesting a range of priority outcomes for disaster resilience at the local level.[17] However, there is scope for greater cross-sectoral sharing of case studies and effective approaches to be adapted and applied in local contexts across communities.

The NSDR recognises the 'need to focus more on action-based resilience planning to strengthen local capacity and capability, with greater emphasis on community engagement and a better understanding of the diversity, needs, strengths and vulnerabilities within communities.'[17.] This in effect endorses the relevance of the core work of Neighbourhood Centres with local communities. The Queensland State Disaster Management Plan (QSDMP)[60] outlines the roles and responsibilities of organisations designated as stakeholders in the disaster management system, and the coordination of disaster operations and activities by those who have been assigned responsibilities. While the QSDMP acknowledges the importance of non-government organisations, these are described in the Plan as 'non-government, non-profit voluntary groups that perform a variety of functions and offer services to the community.'[60] The QDSMP outlines Queensland's disaster management arrangements and is therefore acknowledged as a source of direction. However, a clearer understanding of groups to be considered and potential roles and responsibilities may serve to increase the breadth of organisations willing to support the system.

The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2022–2027: Stronger, Safer and More Resilient Communities (QSDR) states a key objective (Objective 2): 'We work together to better manage disaster risk.'[62] This recognises the need for partnership opportunities in planning for and managing risk reduction across sectors. This objective is well received, although the strengthening of cooperation across sectors, including with community organisations and with communities is also recognised as a 'key challenge'.[62] Building and maintaining networks and relationships has been a critical aspect underpinning the outcomes of NCCs, and other sectors for some time. The Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Disaster Resilience will illustrate the need for greater emphasis to be put on working together across sectors towards disaster resilience.

Appendix D. What does International Research and Literature tell us about the role and value of place-based community organisations, such as NCCs, in Disaster Resilience?

Community-Led Responses

In the study on social capital as part of community level emergency management, Murphy[9] discussed two case studies from events that occurred in Canada. These highlight the role of place-based community networks, including community organisations, in providing assistance at the neighbourhood level during both events, where communities have had to lead response and recovery efforts in the absence of a formal response. The study highlights that this level of support was facilitated by 'established, formal networks formed around community groups' utilising their existing community relationships to meet community need.[9]

Murphy's[9] study also explores the challenges that may affect a local government in the extent to which it is able to build the capacities of all communities within its jurisdiction. For example, in the case of smaller population areas and discrete boundaries, Murphy[9] argues that there should be an enhanced ability for local governments to work collaboratively across their communities, using existing community channels and 'pre-existing organisational capacity to enhance resilience or to aid in the response to a risk event'.[9] This argument is relevant for many Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) across Queensland in developing support for their coordination of disaster operations and activities. The study concludes that a community-led disaster response can be seen as an additional support to government-led responses and suggests a more interactive approach within the system that recognises community capacity. Murphy's analysis challenges current policy and practice here in Australia, where a significant level of interaction and integration is yet to be developed.[9]

In a study on the Canterbury earthquakes, Cretney[7] explores the role of what the author describes as 'community grassroots organisations' in supporting community-led response to disaster. This study describes how an existing organisation in the Christchurch suburb of Lyttelton was able to initiate a community-led response to the earthquake, followed by recovery support. The mission of this community organisation related to community and resilience building. These were strengths utilized by the organisation, together with their connection with the community, to facilitate a range of projects that addressed the needs of that community at the time.

In identifying why resilience levels in this community were high, Cretney's research highlights the pre-existing relationship between the community organisation and the Lyttelton community as a critical factor in being able to 'link people very quickly' to support provided from within the community.[7] Consistent with other studies reviewed, this research also emphasises the significance of pre-existing community organisations, together with local knowledge as key to supporting local action in responding to the needs of individual communities.[7] The researcher subsequently suggests a movement away from the traditional command and control approach of government emergency management agencies, advocating for closer relationships between those agencies and community organisations.[7]

In highlighting the significance of existing traditional organisations in the Christchurch area in the delivery of response and recovery efforts, Kenny and Phibbs[82]discuss how existing networks, infrastructure, and relationships with government agencies, also supported a broader recovery. Their case study was delivered through an es-

tablished Maori organisation that was able to coordinate this much broader effort. Their research stresses collective and collaborative leadership as a key aspect of the success of this community-led response and recovery effort. They also stress how this collective agency approach was inclusive and took on a whole-of-community approach to community-led disaster management. As well as, or as part of, the cultural aspect of this community-led case, the researchers highlight the role of social capital, including social support, the building of social networks, sense of community, and community capacity as significant factors in the community's ability to deliver a rapid mobilization of people and resources.[82]

Appendix E. Australian Studies - Blue Mountains Example

In an article exploring a partnership initiative between neighbourhood centres operating in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales with local emergency services organisations, Redshaw et al[70], focus on outcomes from the development of this cross sector working group. Their study found that the embedded nature of community organisations within their communities had enabled a broader connection with community through enhanced engagement approaches. This resulted in opportunities to provide bushfire preparedness initiatives at 'household, neighbourhood and community levels'.[70] As place-based community organisations, the authors note the significance of their core business of 'building sustainable approaches to community preparedness and readiness' as a defined role.[70]

Appendix F. Extreme Rainfall Events

Extreme rainfall events causing catastrophic flooding have also become more frequent in broad areas of the state. Extensive flooding occurred following the beginning of rainfall in November 2010, with a disaster zone declared over 75 percent of the state in January 2011. The event resulted in 33 lives lost, evacuations of almost 6,000 people and the need to rebuild 28,000 homes.[83] This event saw the most extreme flooding experienced in South-East Queensland in over thirty years.

A report on the hydrological aspects of the January 2011 flood indicated this event was proportionately larger in Brisbane than the previous two recorded flood events in 1893 and 1974, with the 2011 event 'almost double that of the January 1974 flood'.[61] The rainfall experienced over those two months resulted in the need for water to be released from both Wivenhoe and Somerset Dams, exacerbating already swollen river systems.[61] On January 11, the Brisbane River broke its banks, forcing evacuations of Brisbane suburbs close to the river and resulting in 94 suburbs affected by the flooding.[84] Flooding affecting large parts of Queensland also occurred in 2013 from the effects of ex-tropical Cyclone Oswald and again in 2017 from ex-tropical Cyclone Debbie, both tracking to as far as the south-east of the state.

Appendix G. Preparedness Case Studies

Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre Emergency Preparedness Session

Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre hosted an emergency preparedness session attended by 30 local community members, hearing from representatives from the State Emergency Service (SES), Rural Fire Brigade and Bundaberg Regional Council's Disaster Management Coordinator. The session presented information on how community members can prepare themselves and their properties for unpredictable weather events, including bushfire, cyclone and flash flooding. As part of Bundaberg Regional Council, Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre's Community Development Officer also presented on the importance of the role that Neighbourhood Centres play in sharing information, building resilience and throughout the recovery process.

Kingston East Neighbourhood Group: Community Preparation Workshops: Supporting Preparation and a Culture of Awareness

The Kingston East Neighbourhood Group (KENG) was heavily impacted by severe flooding in February/March 2022. This event resulted in an arrangement where the Logan City Council's Disaster Management Team delivered preparedness workshops hosted by the Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre. These workshops focused on increasing community understanding of the steps to minimise the threat of extreme weather events, such as floods, fires, heat waves and high winds. The team also discussed local hazards and how to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events, with a focus on what to expect and what to do when a natural disaster occurs in local neighbourhoods, where to get help and how to support friends and family. The Logan City Council officer commented on the value they experienced in working with the neighbourhood centre.

"Working with Kingston East Neighbourhood Group has allowed Logan City Council to deliver disaster preparedness activities to a wide range of residents. To have local community spaces to come together to conduct these activities is greatly appreciated and the resulting networking is invaluable." Logan City Council.

Bundaberg and District Neighbourhood Centre

Maintaining ongoing support and connection with CALD groups has also become a vital ingredient in ensuring disaster resilience within the community. However, when COVID-19 occurred, it was quickly realised they lacked the ability to inform the CALD community with updated information about the pandemic.

"We realised that most of the CALD community members were not using social media platforms with news services, not watching Australian television and were often sourcing their information from news sites based in their home countries. We reached out to every ethnic group in the community. We made a list of community leaders, these are prominent, respected people in their community. In communities where leaders don't have a huge online presence, we also made a list of community connectors, these are people who are always online, constantly connecting and speaking with the other members of their community. Through these leaders and connectors, we are now able to reach about 90% of the people within CALD communities with up-to-date information about COVID and other natural disasters." Neighbourhood Centre Coordinator

Bundaberg and District Neighbourhood Centre has developed strong, comprehensive plans to respond to all types of events and support their community through numerous hardships.

Appendix H. Community-led Preparedness Case Studies

Hambledon House, Cairns – Food Security Project

Located in cyclone territory, Hambledon House Community Centre, in South Cairns, play a proactive role in disaster preparedness with local community members, particularly those most vulnerable. They have partnered with Cairns Regional Council, QFES and the Police Service to deliver all-day-drop-in community preparation events attracting over 800 people. Through events such as these and regular interactions with local residents at Hambledon House, those at the neighbourhood centre regularly listen to what local people say are most important to them in times of disasters. Food security was a key issue raised.

A community development project through Hambledon House was developed by creating space to hear community members' concerns about people in the community who were unable to afford to buy food for three or four days to sustain themselves during a disaster event. Local residents shared stories about connections with where they lived. Through this sharing, the community members were inspired and created a recipe book. The recipes were of dishes from a range of cultures and used ingredients that were local, affordable and easily accessible. In addition to the recipe book, the people of the project wanted to be able to identify who needs assistance. Some of the ideas they explored involved neighbourhood and street champions who could do a door knock to find out who needed water or food to last several days.

Commenting on the significance of the role of neighbourhood centres in building community disaster resilience, Hambledon House centre coordinator commented, "everything we do here comes from the community in the first place ... our other key asset for connections are our Centre's staff, as they too are embedded community members." Hambledon House hosts approximately 30 community groups, whom they are in regular interactions with.

Community Support Centre Innisfail

"Many new people in the communities don't understand the impact that cyclones can have. Floods and cyclones are the two main natural disasters in this region. Main challenges in the north are around helping new community members to understand the impacts of cyclones and how to prepare."

> **"The centre is developing a video resource on preparing for a cyclone' We're involving all the staff in it so they are sharing their experiences for what they've done to help prepare for this cycle and their experiences through cyclone Yasi and cyclone Larry."**

Appendix I. The Significance of Preparedness to mitigating Response and Recovery Efforts

Adaptation and Flexibility

Centres also reported providing support to other organisations and groups during the flood crisis through sharing resources online to ensure they were better equipped to support their communities. Services such as counselling and working with domestic violence support, normally delivered in a face-to-face setting, were effectively moved to be delivered remotely during the pandemic. This adaptation was crucial in the provision of continuity of service, particularly where access to their centres was affected by flooding, staff had been able to deliver counselling and other services remotely.

Broadening established networks and relationships was also identified by NCCs as having a major effect in supporting their work in response and recovery. In a time of crisis, enhanced ability to draw on a broader range of established networks and relationships to access information, resources and knowledge can make a major impact to facilitating the rapid mobilization of support during an emergency. NCCs reported the expansion of their networks to include organisations such as GIVIT, Volunteering Queensland, and more localised organisations such as other local service providers, Meals on Wheels and local businesses, enhancing their scope to more effectively meet the needs of their communities.

NCCs have also reported further developments to their organisational preparedness since the rainfall and flooding event in February/March 2022, holding workshops with community, connecting with other service providers and with key stakeholders. This preparation has also included the recognition of the need for staff and volunteer training in areas such as working with volunteers and spontaneous volunteers, in first aid, trauma related first aid, understanding the phases of community recovery. The enhancement of their communication methods to assist with a broader community understanding the services and support they are able to offer has also become a manifested need.

NCCs have reported an increased awareness of the significance of organisational capacity, including continuous improvement of business maturity and of business continuity planning to support response and recovery.[51] Workshop participants from the development of this State NCCs Strategy for Bushfire Resilience reiterated this need with a sense of urgency as NCC resources had become stretched. The NCQ Sector Impact Report 2021-22 reported 51% of NCCs had done organisational resilience planning.[31] This focus has seen the adoption of fit for purpose policies and procedures to support areas such as volunteer recruitment and management. A significant impetus for strengthening these areas has been influenced through the advent of spontaneous volunteering, as well as the decline of an aging volunteer workforce during the pandemic. In the wake of the pandemic and increased extreme weather events, many NCCs have gained an enhanced appreciation of the value of business continuity planning to assist with their own preparedness and to enable the continued safe operation of their Centres following impacts of disaster events on their facilities and their staff.

Appendix J. Neighbourhood and Community Centre Community-led Case Study

Emerald Neighbourhood Centre

Emerald Neighbourhood Centre has been operating for 45 years in the regional area of Emerald, a community that experiences droughts, floods and occasional bushfires. The centre is a crucial part of disaster management and community support through running countless community programs and offering referrals to innumerable allied support services. Emerald Neighbourhood centre coordinator spoke to the centre's essential role in immediately engaging with their community and how the support is continued.

> "We had a flooding (in 2021) outside the Gemfields. We provided housing, clothing, food and referrals to partner organisations and support. During this time, we had a central point where everyone gathered. We set up the town hall so people could sleep, eat and we could help direct them to further support. Our contribution does a lot to offset the stress on other organisations."

> "In most natural disasters, emergency services such as the SES assist during the initial crisis period, but after this support ends, Emerald Neighbourhood Centre becomes one of the primary sources of ongoing support for the local community. The emergency relief we provide is comprehensive, heartfelt and ongoing."

Community-led Response: January 2011 Brisbane Flood Event

A study of two community-led response and recovery efforts delivered by a well-established NCC and an emerging, unfunded community organisation in the major flooding event in Brisbane in 2011, outlined the roles delivered by both organisations, as well as the supporting factors that contributed to these significant response, recovery and future preparation efforts. Community leadership, the utilisation of existing community capacity and the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities were key underpinning elements of both of these efforts.[59] The established NCC reported their ability to harness a high capacity group of volunteers, who in turn coordinated the huge amount of mud army spontaneous volunteers.[59]

> "Not just in trucks and utes, but now bus loads of [Council] recruited volunteers ready to go wherever they were needed. And locals wandering the road, equipment in hand. Hundreds and hundreds of people kept arriving, asking where they could help".[59]

A participant in the study described this group as Local knowledge was critical to both groups, enabling response to the large number of vulnerable people in their communities, and significant in providing an understanding of, and dealing with, the complexities that would arise in leading a crisis response effort. An example of this complexity in the established NCC's community involved residents who were hoarders, and often living in squalor, who were refusing help, and refusing to leave their homes as the water was rising.

Pre-existing networks and relationships also played a key role for both groups, enabling the established NCC to obtain key resources to support the response and recovery efforts, as well as in the planning phase. In the initial response phase, food and water were supplied by local service groups, prior to donations arriving from outside sources. Local businesses in the area were part of the organisation's local networks who were able to support a flood appeal as part of the recovery phase and assist with storage space during the height of the crisis. A flood recovery committee continued to meet for well over twelve months following the event. The Manager recalls that as the recovery effort wound back, the group refocussed their role to address preparation,

> **"...we really wanted to just make sure we're better organised for next time and so aggressively over time, you know, as the direct recovery effort started to naturally slow down, it became a focus on disaster resilience".[59]**

The emerging group had acted as an evacuation centre in the response phase, recruiting local volunteers who were experienced in dealing with trauma. As an emerging unfunded organisation, building new relationships and leveraging existing connections assisted their ability to continue to assist their community in recovery for a period of six months. Through partnering with and learning from the established NCC and other community organisations, this group became a thriving NCC in their own right.

The leadership provided by both organisations was a key aspect of both community-led responses, producing strategic approaches to the delivery of their roles and incorporating elements of flexibility to meet the changing needs of the crisis. Supporting this leadership was the participation of a significant local volunteer base who were able to bring a range of capacities to both of these efforts. As one of the Neighbourhood Centre Managers said,

"We did it ourselves here, and if it happens again, we're going to have to do it ourselves again. We can't wait for some guy in a uniform to show up and save us, it's not going to happen that way."[59]

Appendix K. Neighbourhood and Community Centre Recovery Case Study

During the time Community Plus Yeronga Community Centre was open as a flood recovery centre and connected with a family of four from Rocklea who had a metre of water over their home. To compound the challenges, the family were uninsured, of CALD background, had two university student 'children' and a father/husband with health issues. Community Plus community development worker shared further of this family's situation in crisis.

"The family first connected with us to receive assistance from the Services Australia for emergency payment. During their first visit, we connected with the family as they had no cooking facilities or kitchen at the hotel where they were staying or at their home, which was flooded. We provided the family each day with an esky of food to take to their home during their clean up and for dinner when they returned to their hotel rooms".

"During these two initial weeks, we provided meals, support for the family with Red Cross grants, grocery vouchers, fresh fruit and vegetables etc to assist them in any way we were able. We also were able to connect them with a donation from a property developer via Rotary Stones Corner, of stovetop, oven, rangehood, dishwasher, microwave and a connection with an electrician who was able to provide the installation via funds from Lions Ekibin".

"We have continued to support this family with their application for the Resilient Homes Fund and connected them with the Rotary Australia World Community Service grant and Red Cross Hardship funding, from which they received cash funds. In later months, the centre continued to provide support, including assistance to submit a successful appeal for their home assessment outcome".

The centre received the following heart-felt message of gratitude from the family for the support:

"My family and I thank you ... the Yeronga Community Centre and the Groove Properties very much for donating the kitchen package to us. The recent flood had a devastating impact on my family as my house was fully submerged in flood water. We had never experienced the flood before, so we were so worried/anxious and didn't know what to do.

When returning home, there were terrible mess in my house. Especially most of the kitchen appliances were not working ... It took us long time to cook a meal. We were also unable to use the oven to bake and roast meat. Many thanks for the donation[s] .... We can now cook a meal easily ... after hard working with the cleaning up. All of you gave us a hope of recovery and let us move on confidently. Thank you".

Appendix L. Neighbourhood and Community Centres Disaster Resilience Initiatives Matrix

Level	STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 Raise Awareness & Recognition	STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 Strengthen Relationships
National (ANHCA)	☐ Promote NCCs examples of disaster-related work through national peaks. ☐ Support new research to include NCCs Eg. AIDR.	☐ Representation on the National Agency of Disaster Recovery and Resilience.
State (Peak body NCQ)	☐ Advocate the role, value and capacity of NCCs in state-level networks Eg. State HSRG. ☐ Seek increased inclusion of NCCs in research, partly via the Research Advisory Panel.	☐ Seek disaster management sector clarity on appropriate referral pathways to and from NCCs. ☐ Host a Disaster Resilience Fwrum with sector Stakeholders. ☐ Continue to strengthen relationships and collaboration with key state-level stakeholders.
State and Regional (Neighbourhood and Community Centre Networks)	☐ Host peer learning NCC sessions and promote the 'Guide to strengthen connections between NCCs and LDMGs'. ☐ Enhance peer learning and shared resources between NCCs on effective approaches to gauge and communicate NCCs capacity to support disaster affected communities.	☐ NCCs Disaster Resilience Working Group to provide input into the planning of the Growing Resilience Forum and other sector-related opportunities. ☐ Coordinated funding shared regionally for emergency and disaster relief.
Local (Neighbourhood and Community Centres)	☐ Enhance engagement and communication approaches with LDMGs and broader stakeholders to increase understanding, appropriate referrals and practical recognition of NCCs role, value, connections and capacity Eg. Oral presentations to stakeholders and discussions. ☐ Seek inclusion of NCCs and community members in disaster planning processes. ☐ Cross-promotion of NCCs community programs Eg. Recovery Hubs, community-based disaster networks, community champions, First Nations knowledge sharing, checks and support to vulnerable people, wellbeing, resilience, social connection, referrals and services, videos and printed stories of resilience projects, 'Know your neighbour' and CALD campaigns, community working groups and websites, media, signage	☐ Proactively build relationships and collaborative approaches with LDMGs and broader stakeholders to increase efficiency of time and resources. ☐ Co-host and piggy-back onto community preparedness events, information sharing (networks, printed, TV monitors, social media, events, evacuation kits displays) and capacity building initiatives. ☐ Use and sharing of resources Eg. Mobile phone charge stations, cool rooms, emergency relief, digital community noticeboards, USBs for residents saving essential documentation, supplies of ponchos, plastic drop sheets and torches for the homeless, generator prize incentives.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3	STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4
Influence Policy & Shape Funding	**Learning & Development**
☐ Increased identification of funding sources. ☐ Relationship building with disaster funders.	☐ Promote feature stories of NCCs best practice at the national level.
☐ Policy influence on Recovery funding and shaping of program design. ☐ Develop funding models and proposals for procurement reform e.g. SOA. ☐ Strengthen and expand relationships with funders.	☐ Promote stories of NCCs best practice at the state level. ☐ Continual development of the Online Resource Hub and promotion of resources for NCCs to increase sharing, peer learning and work efficiency. ☐ Assist NCCs to better understand disaster management arrangements.
☐ NCCs Disaster Resilience Working Group to provide a reference point and voice on state-level requests and participatory processes.	☐ Host NCC peer learning and sharing of learnings. Further promote stories and regional and local levels. Eg. community-led approaches. ☐ Host NCC peer learning on resources of high importance shared in the Online Resource Hub. ☐ Identify shared training needs and cross-promote training opportunities and resources. ☐ Cross-promote training opportunities and resources. ☐ Develop training modules tailored to NCCs with peer learning components.
☐ Provide evidence of experiences and local voices to inform funding reform advocacy approaches. ☐ Participate in collective approaches to policy reform. ☐ Participate in co-design opportunities to reshape funding programs.	☐ NCCs identify and share stories of practice. ☐ Contribute content and utilise the Online Resource Hub for NCCs to increase sharing, peer learning and work efficiency. ☐ Connect community members and staff with resources and training Eg. QDMA Arrangements and Recovery, P-CEP, Business Continuity Planning, community building skills, trauma informed practice, communicating across cultures, psychological first aid, suicide prevention, evacuation and recovery processes, spontaneous volunteer management.

Appendix M. Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience 2020 - 2023 Summary

A	Raise awareness among disaster management representatives, the capacity of Neighbourhood Centres to respond to the needs of bushfire affected communities.
B	Continue to build relationships with the Local Disaster Management Groups and explore collaborative ways to enhance communities' resilience to bushfire.
C	Develop a process for managing and supporting volunteers.
D	Develop a business continuity plan template for Neighbourhood Centres.
E	Enhance resource sharing and collaboration among Neighbourhood Centres.

Appendix N. Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Monsoon Resilience 2020 - 2023 Summary

A	Communicate the role and capacity of Neighbourhood Centre in supporting monsoon-affected communities.
B	Increase monsoon preparedness through having conversations and sharing locally relevant information with community members about the risk of and how to prepare for monsoons.
C	Raise awareness about the most affected population during monsoons being the vulnerable individuals; And the value of neighbourhood centres being able to refer identified individual to some local council's "Vulnerable People Register." Additionally to build the resilience of the vulnerable population through strengthening their connection to a support network.
D	Continually identify opportunities to communicate and collaborate with local organisations, Local Disaster Management Group and local Council on supporting monsoon affected communities and for Neighbourhood Centres to be linked into their referral database.
E	Advocate for neighbourhood centres to be included in disaster planning by raising awareness with the Local Disaster Management Group and the government about their capacity and available resources to support monsoon-affected communities.
F	Acquire adequate funding for (i) supporting staff number and wages and (ii) upskilling staff and disaster management to enhance neighbourhood centres capacity in working with local networks to support one soon affected communities.

Appendix O. Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience 2021 - 2023 Summary

A	Raise awareness among community organisations, drought management stakeholders and grant-funders, the value of Neighbourhood Centres as the support hub and knowledge bank for drought-affected communities.
B	Review current procedures and capacity for drought support and work together to develop and articulate a Centre-specific or regional Drought Management Plan which outlines their capacity, connections, resources and procedure for drought management. The Drought Management Plan will be shared with Local Drought Communities and relevant stakeholders to enhance the coordination of local drought management.
C	Create opportunities to share their learnings and experiences with other drought management stakeholders and explore collaborations in supporting drought-affected communities. These stakeholders include the Local Drought Committee, local Council, service providers, community organisations and leaders, businesses and drought-focused organisations.
D	Seek drought funds and resources to employ or enhance existing community-based Drought Workers who are dedicated to providing warm connections and timely, relevant support. This will help to build the social cohesion and resilience of local communities.
E	Raise awareness among grant-funders and government to address the whole-of-community impact of drought and to communicate to drought-affected individuals that accepting assistance is a way of contributing to their local community's economy.
F	Neighbourhood Centres will continue to grow their formal and informal regional drought networks to further conversations and collaborations on building the resilience of drought-affected communities.

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