

**GET READY**  
For disasters



# Understanding resilience capability in the community services sector:

Evaluating implementation of the ACOSS *Six  
Steps to Resilient Community Organisations*  
Toolkit



This publication was produced by the Hunter Joint Organisation



## Project Partners

Funded under the joint State and Commonwealth Natural Disaster Resilience Program



**Justice**  
Office of Emergency Management



## Acknowledgements

- Karl Mallon (Climate Risk)
- Kellie Caught (Australian Council of Social Services)
- Maurissa Crosby (NSW State Emergency Service)
- The nine community service managers who spoke passionately and with deep knowledge of their service and clients.

## Author

Heidi Chappelow, Hunter Joint Organisation

## Address for Correspondence:

Regional Policy & Programs Division  
Hunter Joint Organisation  
PO Box 3137  
THORNTON NSW 2322  
Phone: (02) 4978 4020  
Fax: (02) 4966 0588  
Email: [rppd@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:rppd@hunterjo.com.au)

© Hunter Joint Organisation

## Suggested Bibliographic Citation

Hunter Joint Organisation, 2019. Understanding resilience capability in the community services sector: Evaluating implementation of the ACOSS Six Steps to Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit. Hunter Joint Organisation, Thornton, NSW.

## Disclaimer

This report has been developed by the Hunter Joint Organisation. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and completeness, no responsibility is taken, nor guarantee given, by the Hunter Joint Organisation with respect to errors or omissions in the materials included. The Hunter Joint Organisation does not accept any responsibility or liability in regard to your use of any information given in this register. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSW Government.

# Foreword

The increase in frequency and intensity of severe weather events has society focused on how to be better at preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies, to save lives and protect communities.

Policy directions and programs at all levels of government are increasingly focused on building more self-reliant and connected communities that look out for and support each other during emergencies. This is because in large scale events it may take days or even weeks for emergency support services to reach everyone in need. For example, a strong local emergency unit may have 130 volunteers however, the area which they are to cover has over 160,000 people.

*"Disaster Planning is important for our organisation, and for the whole community too, because so much support comes from this organisation that it's letting people down if we can't operate."*

*(Community Service Manager, personal communication May 2019)*

*"You can't support your community and clients to be prepared and networked for disaster if your organisation isn't ready and prepared before-hand."*

*(Community Service Manager, personal communication May, 2019)*

Research shows that people who are experiencing disadvantage and crisis in daily life are disproportionately affected by, and vulnerable to extreme events (UNISDR, 2015). This includes people who may have poor coping strategies, may require specialised communication, or specialised accommodation and transport, who require continuity of support or for whom an emergency may trigger acute medical needs.

It is for this reason that the community service sector has an integral role to play in preparing for and responding to emergency events. They play a key role in providing often critical support to people who need it and have extensive reach across the whole community. Community organisations are also key hubs of social capital, through trust relationships and expert skills, and are frequently the core avenue through which people experiencing high levels of vulnerability connect with the broader community.

It is for this reason that the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) developed the *Six Steps to Resilience* toolkit, designed to support community service organisations undertake business continuity planning to ensure they can continue to deliver core services during emergencies. This report provides the outcomes of an evaluation process undertaken with nine community service organisations involved in applying the *Six Steps to Resilience* process over a 12-month period. It documents both the insights of these organisations on why it is important to become disaster ready and the barriers they encounter in doing so.

*"Disasters are hard to get your head around. I think it's so important to have that awareness and not have your head in the sand. Hearing others' stories helps you to realise it's a reality, it could happen to anybody."*

*(Community Service Manager, personal communication May, 2019)*

# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Importance and role of the Community Services Sector .....	1
1.2	Previous research and literature .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Evaluating implementation of the ACOSS Six Steps to Resilient Community Organisations toolkit ....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	Sub Regional Forums and Workshops .....	7
2.2	Targeted Workshops .....	9
2.3	Evaluating the effectiveness of the Six Steps Process.....	11
<b>3</b>	<b>Discussion: Key findings of the Six Steps Project .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Stakeholder-specific recommendations to increase organisational capability and resilience .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>References.....</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Appendix 1 – Sub Regional Workshop Promotional Flyer .....</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Appendix 2 –Inhibiting and Contributing factors to CSO Disaster Resilience Capability .....</b>	<b>27</b>

# Acronyms

ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Services
AIIMS	Australasian Inter-Agency Incident Management System
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CSO	Community Service Organisation
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
HJO	Hunter Joint Organisation
LGA	Local Government Area
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSW	New South Wales
PPRR	Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	State Emergency Services

# Executive Summary

In 2016 the Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO), in partnership with Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), attained funding to provide support to increase resilience in community service organisations across the Hunter and Central Coast region using the *Six Steps to Resilience* toolkit which had recently been developed by ACOSS.

The objectives of the project were to:

1. Raise community organisations' awareness about the importance of business continuity plans (BCPs) in ensuring core services can continue to be provided during and when recovering from extreme events.
2. Support community organisations to complete the *Six Steps* process within a collaborative workshop environment, to ensure that by the end of the project they have successfully completed a BCP.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the *Six Steps* process in assisting a diverse spectrum of community service organisations to develop BCPs.

The *Six Steps to Resilience* toolkit was developed by ACOSS to provide business continuity planning tools appropriate to the community services sector. The *Six Steps* include:

1. *Leading resilience* – gaining a mandate brings the weight of the organisation on board
2. *Building networks* – arrangements can be made quickly in an emergency when people know each other
3. *Knowing your risks* – community organisations are exposed to lots of different risks but there is also commonality
4. *Managing your risks* – common risk management strategies can be applied in community organisations
5. Preparing others – clients, volunteers, staff and board members need appropriate training in disaster risk reduction
6. *Learning and inspiring* - testing and updating a plan makes it relevant and usable

Key activities delivered through the project included:

- Workshops and forums to provide guidance and support to community service organisations to implement the *Six Steps* toolkit, including both sub regional events and targeted workshop sessions delivered individually to nine different community service organisations
- In-depth interviews “one year later” of nine Managers across the 20 organisations who participated in the project to evaluate the *Six Steps* toolkit and workshops, and to compare the “before and after” disaster preparedness levels of their organisations.

Key findings derived from project delivery and the formal evaluation process included:

- Comprehensive endorsement by Community Organisations of the *Six Steps* toolkit in its current form. No key changes to the toolkit itself were identified as being necessary
- The project has “shone a light” on the importance of the community service sector in disaster risk reduction and highlighted a need for urgent action and a whole of community approach to supporting community sector resilience.

- In the absence of a mandate and resourcing from their funding bodies, regardless of Board level leadership, organisations struggled to allocate scant resources to implement the “Six Steps” process.
- In the absence of the above factors, the key driver for undertaking the “Six Steps” process was a “resilience champion” in the organisation.
- A very low success rate across organisations in completing a full business continuity plan indicates that there are significant inhibiting factors for community service organisations in completing the *Six Steps* process
- The level of disaster preparedness activity in community organisations is closely related to previous experience of significant disaster impacts
- A reactive ‘hand on the hotplate’ disaster learning model (i.e. learning through direct experience of a disaster) is both undesirable and ineffective for broad scale sectoral change
- The focus, scope and capability of community organisations is highly relevant to building community disaster resilience. The sector can play a pivotal role in supporting emergency management, state and local government authorities partner with vulnerable community members in disaster Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PPRR). Without the involvement of the community services sector, authorities will not have the capability or specific skill sets required to effectively engage and support these audiences to the level required during an emergency
- A mandated and resourced role for community service organisations, such as within the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS), has potential to improve disaster management outcomes
- Improved knowledge within Local Government and Emergency Management Authorities of which community service organisations are operating locally would enhance the capability to quickly communicate with people who are vulnerable via their established communication and support networks.
- Community Service Organisation staff require training and empowerment at all levels to establish effective disaster resilience work practices.
- Established small and medium place-based not-for-profit community service organisations support the concept of collaborative models to work with others in the sector to improve disaster planning and capability. Recent industry changes that have established a privatised, decentralised and more competitive industry however, have created barriers to collaboration of this nature.

Overall the report has identified that community service organisations have the skills and relationships that would contribute to whole of society resilience and disaster risk reduction via implementation of the National Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, they face substantial internal and external inhibiting factors to building resilience. A whole of community approach is needed to increase the resilience of community organisations to enable them to ‘be there when people need them most’. As such, report recommendations are tailored to specific stakeholder groups including Governments, Emergency Agencies, Educational organisations, community sector peak bodies, community organisations, public and private sector organisations and community groups.

# 1 Background

## 1.1 Importance and role of the Community Services Sector

With the increasing incidence of extreme and unprecedented events associated with climate and population change, the community sector faces the same increasing hazards as their communities. These include generalised hazards such as earthquake, drought, storms, heatwaves, premises fire, pandemic and infrastructure failure, as well as locally specific hazards such as urban flash flooding, landslides, mine subsidence, bushfire, coastal erosion and tsunami.

The community service sector includes a wide range of organisations such as aged care, disability providers, multi-cultural services, family support services, meal delivery services, Aboriginal services, youth services, mental health services and homelessness services. The services provide specialised and often critical support to people who need it. These needs will continue and be even higher when preparing, responding and recovering from emergency situations.

Their client groups represent people who may have poor coping strategies, may require specialised communication, or specialised accommodation and transport. They include people who need continuity of support and people for whom an emergency may trigger acute medical needs.

Community Organisations support and have a duty of care to their clients. They have extensive reach across the whole community, with the nine organisations interviewed through the project alone having a reach of over 40,000 visits in a year. Community organisations are key hubs of social capital, through trust relationships and expert skills, they connect people experiencing the high levels of vulnerability with capable workforces and upstanding community members.

However, disaster preparedness is outside the traditional scope of community service organisations. CSOs are generally not resourced to plan for business continuity in an emergency nor to contribute to disaster resilience. They are also often not formerly aware of their role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Organisations that have learned through 'Hand on the Hotplate' (i.e. first-hand experience of a disaster) are predominantly those at the forefront of disaster planning and readiness, and are completing this activity over and above their established workloads despite the constraints of existing funding models and agreements. However, isolated progress of this nature is not yet contributing to an overall or sustained increase in resilience across the community services sector.

Community sector organisations are also particularly vulnerable to many hazards because:

- They frequently operate on a fragile economic balance
- They support large numbers of people who are highly vulnerable
- Staff and clients can be spread over broad geographic areas, often working or living in isolation and are therefore exposed to a complex variety of hazards
- Any interruption to essential services such as electricity can produce heightened risk of death, injury and trauma amongst staff and/or clients



- They are generally ill-prepared for unforeseen and unprecedented extremities associated with combined climate and population / demographic changes

The community sector currently has significant inhibiting factors limiting their capacity to reduce these risks including:

- A focus on service delivery driven by a competitive, industry wide service delivery funding model
- The traditional scope of activities undertaken by community services organisations has excluded disaster risk reduction - therefore Disaster Risk Reduction culture, training and skills are often absent.

In an emergency situation, the people who rely on the support of community service organisations need their assistance more than ever. Additionally, people who have never needed support may suddenly find that they are in need of additional assistance. If community organisations cannot operate, temporarily or permanently, due to severe events, people are at risk of death, injury and trauma. In contrast, a resilient and prepared community sector would have an inherent capability to not only partner with each other, but with emergency management authorities, state and local governments to reduce the impacts of extreme events, both through supporting their clients and staff to prepare, respond and recover, and through supporting the broader community.

The Six Steps to Resilient Community Organisations toolkit has been developed to enable CSOs to complete business continuity plans and the kit has been widely supported by CSO Managers involved in the project. However, as this report will identify, the toolkit alone is insufficient to bring about widespread and sustained change in the sector.

Fundamental barriers identified by industry stakeholders involved in the project evaluation include a lack of broader support for systemic industry change by government and a lack of mandatory requirements and resources to undertake business continuity planning processes. If mandated, resourced and engaged in emergency planning frameworks and processes, sector representatives identified that they would be natural partners with Emergency Agencies and Governments using their Person-Centred relationships, skill sets, and workforces. A resilient and empowered community sector has the potential to dramatically reduce the personal, community and financial costs of extreme events and emergencies.

## 1.2 Previous research and literature

This report contributes to a growing body of local and international knowledge of the vital role of community service sector in disaster risk reduction throughout the 'prevent, prepare, respond and recover' (PPRR) disaster cycle. There are six Australian documents contributing to the development of this study, *The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*<sup>1</sup>; *Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes*<sup>2</sup>; *Identifying Risk Perceptions, Level of Preparedness and Communication Channels for 'At Risk' Communities*

---

<sup>1</sup> COAG, National Strategy for Disaster Resilience is available at [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national\\_strategy\\_disaster\\_resilience.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national_strategy_disaster_resilience.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Mallon, Hamilton, Black, Beem & Abs, Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes is available at [https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached\\_files\\_publications/Mallon\\_2013\\_Adapting\\_community\\_sector.pdf](https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached_files_publications/Mallon_2013_Adapting_community_sector.pdf)

*in Respect to Natural Disasters*<sup>3</sup>; *Six Steps to Resilience*<sup>4</sup>; *Identifying Organisational Emergency Preparedness*<sup>5</sup> and the *National Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*<sup>6</sup>. It is also underpinned by the international agreements for reducing disaster risk, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, *Paris Agreement* and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

### The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (COAG, 2011)<sup>7</sup>

*The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, COAG 2011, identified that community sector is 'at the forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia', that the sector is 'critical to helping communities to cope with, and recover from, a disaster.' It outlined that Australian governments will 'continue to partner with these agencies and organisations to spread the disaster resilience message and to find practical ways to strengthen disaster resilience in the communities they serve' (COAG, 2011 p V).

### Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes (ACOSS, 2013)<sup>8</sup>

In 2013 ACOSS published a landmark study, *Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes*, which provides an evidence base for subsequent documents including this report. Findings include:

1. Community Service Organisations are shock absorbers for people who are vulnerable
2. CSOs are vulnerable and not well prepared for extreme weather events
3. Disruptions to CSOs can have very serious consequences for the individuals and communities they support
4. Vulnerability of CSOs is overlooked in policy and research
5. CSOs have willingness and specialist skills to prepare for and respond to extreme weather
6. CSOs face overwhelming barriers to increasing resilience including insufficient finance, skills gaps and scope clarity
7. Resilience indicators are organisational size, risk awareness and prior experience of a major disruption

The research recommendations include resources, sector preparedness, resilience building, sharing risks and further research, specifically:

- a) Establishing a federal community service sector adaptation fund for CSO adaptation and resilience building
- b) Compensating CSOs for their work in response and recovery in a timely manner

---

<sup>3</sup> HCCREMS, 2014, *Identifying Risk Perceptions, Level of Preparedness and Communication Channels for 'At Risk' Communities in Respect to Natural Disasters* is available at <https://www.hccrems.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/disaster-preparedness-in-at-risk-groups-final.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps>

<sup>5</sup> Llewellyn, Dominey-Howes, Villeneuve and Brooks, 2017, *Identifying Organisational Emergency Preparedness* is available at <https://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/cdrp/projects/Field%20Test%20report%20on%20application%20of%20RCO.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Home Affairs, 2018, *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* can be accessed at <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-disaster-risk-reduction-framework.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> COAG, 2011, *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* is available at [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national\\_strategy\\_disaster\\_resilience.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national_strategy_disaster_resilience.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> ACOSS, 2013, *Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes* is available at [https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached\\_files\\_publications/Mallon\\_2013\\_Adapting\\_community\\_sector.pdf](https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached_files_publications/Mallon_2013_Adapting_community_sector.pdf)

- c) Accommodating CSOs contractual (funding) obligations/delays due to response and recovery work
- d) Resourcing CSOs to increase disaster risk awareness
- e) Resourcing CSOs to conduct risk assessments and develop continuity and emergency plans
- f) Resourcing CSOs to train staff and volunteers in preparedness
- g) Developing resilience building tools that can be used by CSOs
- h) Developing a benchmarking tool to measure CSO and sector progress toward resilience
- i) Initiating sector level adaptation, recognising the additional barriers for small and medium organisations
- j) Collaborating with the insurance sector to develop sector-specific insurance packages
- k) Building multi-sector networks focussed on addressing the needs of vulnerable people
- l) Formally recognising role of CSOs in PPRR Federal, State and Local government and resourcing at all levels

The culmination of this ACOSS 2013 report is that urgent funding is required to enable the well-equipped but under-resourced CSO sector to understand and further adapt to their role in strengthening disaster resilience in Australia.

#### Identifying Risk Perceptions, Level of Preparedness and Communication Channels for 'At Risk' Communities in Respect to Natural Disasters (HCCREMS, 2014)<sup>9</sup>

Social research completed by the University of Newcastle in the Central Coast region (HCCREMS, 2014), confirms the need for CSO involvement in DRR. The study conducted focus groups with low income households, very young and very elderly people, people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people in and around the NSW Central Coast. It identified limited capacity of these people to recover from disaster events and identified some alarming plans as to what to do in a potential emergency. The study demonstrates the depth and complexity of disaster preparation challenges of 'at risk' groups. It recommends the need for CSO involvement in disaster planning, education, networks and coordination with emergency services.

#### Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR, 2015)<sup>10</sup>

The Sendai Framework acknowledges that women, children and people in vulnerable situations have been disproportionately affected by disaster and mandates a broader, more people-centred, preventative approach to disaster risk reduction. This approach connects directly with the DRR needs of client groups and specialist skills of community organisations in Australia.

As a signatory to the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework, Australia is aiming for: '*A substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses*'. However, the national disaster expenditure is around \$18 billion per year and based on development and population growth is predicted to reach \$39 billion per year by 2050 prior to accounting for climate change risks (Deloitte, 2017).<sup>11</sup> In order to deliver on their commitment to Sendai,

<sup>9</sup> HCCREMS, 2014, <https://www.hccrems.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/disaster-preparedness-in-at-risk-groups-final.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> UNISDR, 2015, Sendai Framework is available at [https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Deloitte, 2018, Building Resilience to Natural Disasters in our States and Territories can be accessed at [http://australianbusinessroundtable.com.au/assets/documents/ABR\\_building-resilience-in-our-states-and-territories.pdf](http://australianbusinessroundtable.com.au/assets/documents/ABR_building-resilience-in-our-states-and-territories.pdf)

Australian governments need to prioritise disaster risk reduction or face spiralling costs and long-term impacts. The community sector is well placed to implement disaster resilience amongst vulnerable populations through community preparedness measures.

### 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations General Assembly, 2015)<sup>12</sup>

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a balanced and integrated commitment to social, economic and environmental wellbeing. They are a global pledge to 'leave no-one behind'. Community service organisations are already helping the nation achieve its SDG targets through reducing inequalities and the impacts of poverty and through improving health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals and communities. The community service sector could also be further resourced to reach the sustainable development goals. For example, SDG Target 1.5 is to:

*'By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters'.*

A disaster resilient community services sector is vital in achieving this target, both for preparing their client groups and through providing continuity of care through crisis and recovery.

### Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015)<sup>13</sup>

The Paris Agreement is an important aspect of managing disaster risk through driving down greenhouse gas emissions thereby mitigating climate risks. Efforts to build resilience and reduce disaster risk which ignore the Paris Agreement are deficient. Inclusion and equity are woven through the Paris Agreement such as:

*"7.5: Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate."p9*

Community services are well placed within communities to advocate for human rights through climate action and facilitate such inclusion.

### ACOSS Six Steps to Resilient Community Organisations toolkit (ACOSS, 2015)<sup>14</sup>

In direct response to the need identified in Mallon et. al. 2013, the Six Steps to Resilient Community Organisations toolkit provides benchmarking and resilience building tools suited to the sector.

The Six Steps to Resilience are:

---

<sup>12</sup> UN, 2015, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be accessed at [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

<sup>13</sup> UNFCCC, 2015, Paris Agreement can be accessed at [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps>

1. Leading resilience – gaining a mandate brings the weight of the organisation on board
2. Building networks – arrangements can be made quickly in an emergency when people know each other
3. Knowing your risks – community organisations are exposed to lots of different risks but there is also commonality
4. Managing your risks – common risk management strategies can be applied in community organisations
5. Preparing others – clients, volunteers, staff and board members need appropriate training in disaster risk reduction
6. Learning and inspiring - testing and updating a plan makes it relevant and usable

#### Identifying Organisational Emergency Preparedness (Llewellyn, Dominey-Howes, Villeneuve & Brooks, 2017)<sup>15</sup>

A field-testing study for the Six Steps to Resilience toolkit was conducted by University of Sydney. The study focused on Disability Service Organisations, requesting they read, complete and review the toolkit. The results confirmed that CSOs were not typically engaging in organisational preparedness due to busy workloads and lack of experience. The study identified that the toolkit needed further focus on empowerment of clients as key decision makers.

#### National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (Department of Home Affairs, 2018)<sup>16</sup>

Sitting below the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (COAG, 2011), the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework integrates with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement for Climate Change and the 2030 Development Agenda. It takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the causes of disaster risk, not only the symptoms, and acknowledges that individuals and communities do not control many of the levers needed to reduce some disaster risks. However, it asks each sector and organisation (which includes community services) to implement the framework within their areas of responsibility and to engage in progressing national or cross-sectoral actions or initiatives which could be required to implement the disaster risk reduction framework.

---

<sup>15</sup> Llewellyn et. al., Identifying Organisational Emergency Preparedness can be accessed at <https://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/cdrp/projects/Field%20Test%20report%20on%20application%20of%20RCO.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Home Affairs, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-disaster-risk-reduction-framework.pdf>

## 2 Evaluating implementation of the ACOSS *Six Steps to Resilient Community Organisations* toolkit

In 2016 the Hunter Joint Organisation, in partnership with ACOSS, received funding through the Community Resilience Innovation Program to:

1. Raise awareness among Community Service Organisations' of the importance of business continuity plans (BCPs) in ensuring core services can continue to be provided during and recovering from extreme events.
2. Support community organisations complete the *Six Steps* process within a collaborative workshop environment, to enable them to successfully complete a BCP.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the *Six Steps* process in assisting a diverse spectrum of community service organisations develop a BCP.

The primary activities delivered under the project to achieve these objectives included:

1. Sub regional forums and workshops
2. Targeted workshops
3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the "Six Steps" process

### 2.1 Sub Regional Forums and Workshops

#### Activities delivered

The project plan proposed the delivery of:

- Four sub-regional forums (to be located in the Mid-coast, Upper Hunter, Lower Hunter and Central Coast) to raise awareness within CSO's of the impacts disasters may have on their ability to continue providing services.
- A series of three more targeted workshops in each sub region to support CSO's progress through the Six Steps process (i.e. each workshop would cover two of the Six Steps)

The Project Officer and the Region's 11 councils promoted the project widely through Council managed CSO Interagency Network members. This included development and email dissemination of a two-page fact sheet and more specific event invitations (refer Appendix 1) to over 1000 local people involved in the community sector via the interagency networks.

The Project Officer also attended two Interagency meetings in each sub-region over a four-month period where the project was introduced and discussed, as well as to the Regional Social Planners and Community Development Network comprising staff from each of the region's councils. Overall, the Project Officer met directly with over 200 people involved in the CSO sector to promote the imperative and availability of the Six Steps to Resilience workshops.

Despite this level of promotion however, registrations from CSO's for the workshops were extremely low. As a result, only one sub regional workshop was delivered, with this occurring in the Lower Hunter. This event was attended by 22 participants including 11 CSO Managers. The workshop program included:

- Presenting disaster risks of CSOs and their clients
- Introducing the Six Steps toolkit

- Collaborative completion of the risk register and
- Networking between CSOs

## Outcomes

### Event promotion

While established communication strategies and methods were implemented that have previously proven successful in engaging local government staff, these proved unsuccessful in engaging the attention and participation of Community Service Organisations. For example, parallel disaster resilience forums targeting local government staff delivered during the same period attracted up to 100 participants per event. Contributing factors contributing to this identified through project evaluation include:

- The HJO was not recognised as a trusted voice for CSOs
- Interagency Meetings at which direct promotion occurred were not attended by all CSOs
- Emails disseminated to CSO staff experienced poor uptake levels, given that CSO staff receive numerous and regular emails offering training
- CSOs as very operationally focused and have limited resources available to attend strategic training
- The high levels of flux in the CSO sector mean that Local Councils are not always aware of how many CSOs are operating in their Local Government Area.

### Participation

Despite the low level of workshops registrations, those organisations that did participate in the Lower Hunter workshop represented a range of CSO types operating in the region. Engagement was highest from community aged care providers (recently having adding NDIS services) and neighbourhood centres, as can be seen from the following figures.

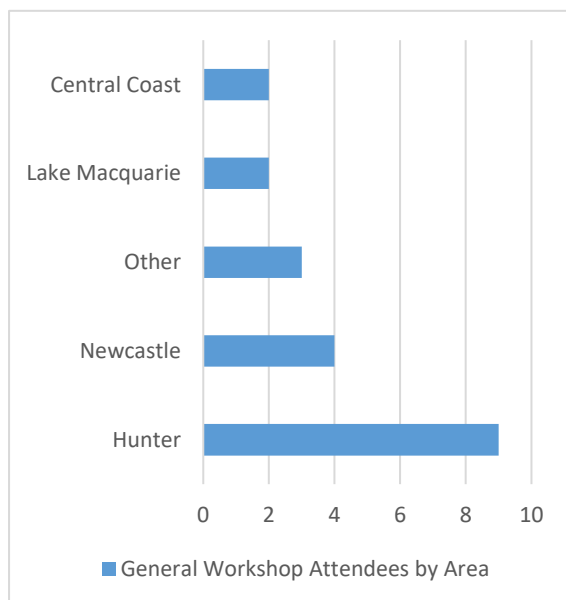


Figure 1. General Workshop Attendees by Area

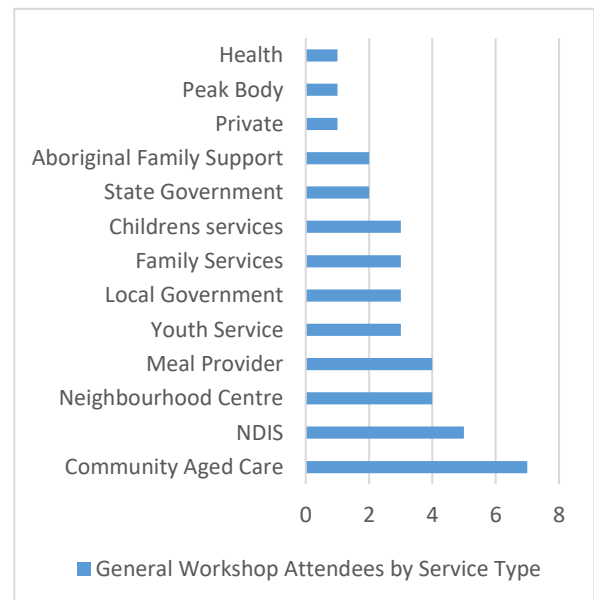


Figure 2. Workshop Attendees by service type (NB. NDIS services are included but there were no disability specific providers.



## Participant feedback

Key feedback provided by participants in the Lower Hunter Workshop were that they “enjoyed networking with other organisations, and hearing from different people’s approach to disaster preparedness”, but were also “not sure of the next steps” and “a bit overwhelmed”.

*“The information was very eye opening. The tools they gave us were shared around the room”*

*“I remember talking to other people about how we could get together and share the load”*

*“It was really good networking. I realised you do need these things in place, whether you are able to do it or not”*

*“It made you think about all the little things you might overlook, best means of communication with different clients, all that sort of stuff”*

*“Everybody was offered to be engaged in the process. I don’t think there was anything that wasn’t good, it was a bit overwhelming probably”*

*“We went through the risk matrix and discussed how disasters have or could impact. It was too quick and tried to cover too much”*

## 2.2 Targeted Workshops

In light of the challenges experienced in attracting CSO participants to centralised sub regional workshops, a strategy of organisationally targeted workshops was tested and proved to be very successful. This possibly reflects the broader workshops not being tailored enough to the needs of each organisation. By redirecting the workshops to a more organisation specific approach greater buy-in was achieved, and so three targeted workshops were delivered.

The rational for the workshops was that they should be:

- Collaborative with multiple stakeholders in their own space, with a facilitator to visit and lead them through a process with a written agreed approach to issues.
- Include real (or real but redacted) examples and mock examples of a completed BCP to provide a context for participants, including a methodology.



## Activities delivered

Three targeted workshops were delivered including:

- One comprising many branches of the same organisation,
- One for a collective of services which operate out of the same building (plus one other organisation)
- One workshop comprising one organisation only.

## Outcomes

### Participation

Figures 3 and 4 below show the nature of participation in the targeted workshops by location and organisation type.

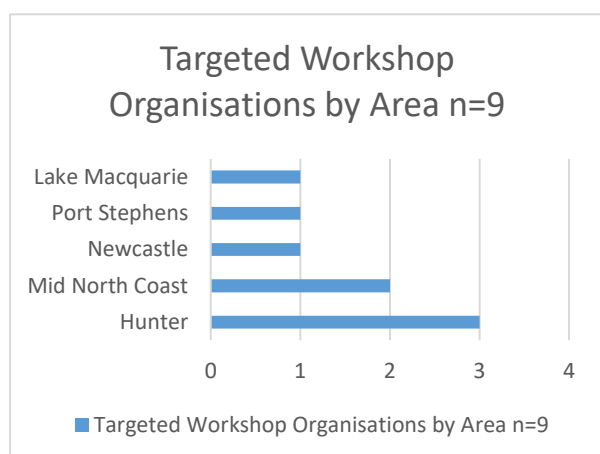


Figure 3. Organisations attending workshops by Area

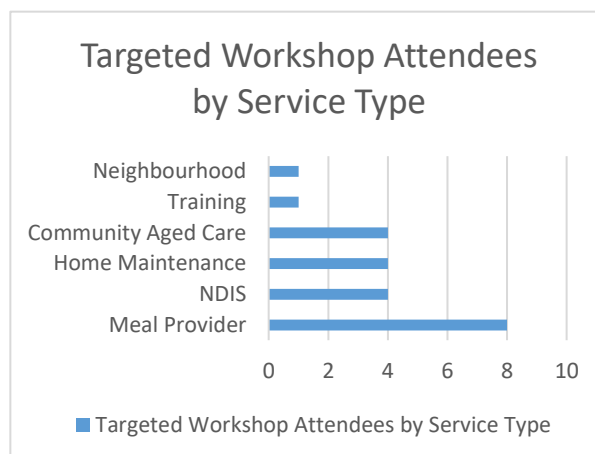


Figure 4. Workshop attendees by service type

### Participant feedback

Staff and managers involved in the targeted workshops were up-beat about productive engagement and planning generated by having the “right people around the table” and felt empowered about their internal capacity. However, while the targeted workshops were effective in getting resilience on the organisational agenda, evaluation outcomes have confirmed that there was a need for more sustained support to motivate and catalyse ongoing effort to continue development of a BCP.

*“Being one person trying to do the lot, any little bit of help is like a gem. It was like a gold nugget given to me then ripped away at the same time because nothing ever happened”*

*“We went through the whole process, and “Here’s a template and now get going”, but we didn’t get going, and that’s where we’re at, we’re still at that point”*

*“We haven’t done anything about Six Steps since the workshop, but in so much as you can never foretell what disaster may strike, we are prepared”*

*“I’m more confident of our team’s capability”*

*“Seeing that all the key staff knew how to process all of this. They just had it!”*

## 2.3 Evaluating the effectiveness of the Six Steps Process

A project evaluation was conducted during March - May 2019 to analyse the effectiveness of the *Six Steps* process delivered under the project. This evaluation aimed to understand the project reach and disaster preparedness activity undertaken by CSOs during the 12-month period since they had attended project workshops and been provided with the *Six Steps* toolkit.

### Activities delivered

#### Questionnaire Design

The Hunter JO, ACOSS and Climate Risk collaborated to create a survey to inform the evaluation process. This sought to determine the following:

Question	Purpose
Who did the project reach?	To gauge community reach of the organisations who were involved
What was the effectiveness of the toolkit?	To gauge whether the organisations found the toolkit useful
What was the effectiveness of the workshops? How did 'before and after' emergency preparedness compare?	To gauge whether the workshops and/or toolkit were effective for supporting organisations to implement BCPs and/or resilience measures
What experience did organisations have engaging with <i>Six Steps</i> ?	To gauge what changes could enable sector-wide increases in resilience

#### Recruitment of interviewees

Invitation emails were sent to participants of the general and targeted workshops. Phone calls were made prioritising CSOs who could be visited face to face. Some organisations were unable to participate in an interview but gave brief feedback over the phone. Phone calls were more effective than emails in engaging participants.

Interviews were held at CSO workplaces. Attending the workplace provided mutual benefit through giving the interviewer a sense of the organisation and minimising effort for busy service managers, as well as incidental engagement of other staff. Audio was recorded, and the interviewer typed notes directly into the online questionnaire product "Survey Monkey". The interview style flowed freely, allowing people to answer each question as they considered appropriate to their context and experience. Interview participants were eager to discuss their disaster resilience experience, with interviews extending between 1-3 hours. Service managers reported that the interview process had refocused their attention on Disaster Resilience and they were motivated to take next steps.

#### Analysis

Interview data was reviewed, analysed and synthesised by listening through and transcribing interviews, analysing the text and coding for emergent themes. Results were compared to prior studies for discussion and recommendations

## Outcomes

The *Six Steps* stories of CSO managers produced a rich dataset of information in three key areas:

1. Progress on Business Continuity Plans and resilience initiatives
2. Feedback on the Six Steps Toolkit effectiveness
3. Feedback on the workshops' support process effectiveness.

### Progress on the completion of Business Continuity Plans

The key finding arising from the interview process regarding completion of Business Continuity Plans was that only one of the 9 CSO's who had commenced the process had successfully been able to complete a full BCP. Figure 5 depicts the varying levels of BCP development achieved by the CSOs interviewed, undertaken either directly as a result of the project or through other initiatives.

What was clear from the interviews however, was that despite being committed to the project and recognising the importance of the outcome, developing and completing a BCP was not a significant enough priority for most of the organisations relative to other priorities that occurred during the project window. This tends to reinforce views identified through the evaluation that without a mandate (to prioritise) and resources (to execute), successfully completing a BCP remains a largely unachievable outcome for most CSOs.

An additional observation was that while many of the CSOs interviewed undertook resilience focused activities consistent with the Six Steps process – these were not sufficient to provide a full BCP.

From the interviews and BCP completion rates identified, there also appears to be strong correlation between lived experience of extreme events and the commitment to implement activities that will avoid reliving the organisational strains and failures experienced. This presents a challenge to achieving sector wide CSO resilience, as “hand on the hot-plate” learning is not a desirable learning model or platform for strategic policy development and implementation.

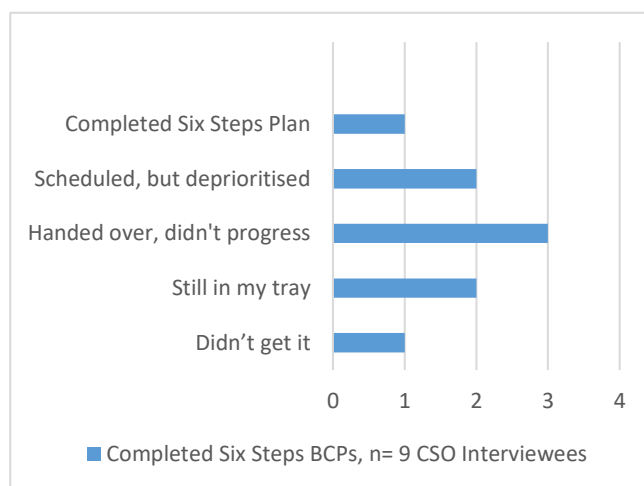


Figure 5. Progress of CSOs in completing BCP

*I can see the relevance quite clearly and the benefits to the organisation and other organisations in the area to have a plan for serious cases that need to be put in place. Relevance? Yes. Ability to achieve it – questionable, at this stage.*

*It is a very big process for a time-poor sector*

*"Here's our disaster plan. That's our list of people we've nominated who really are at risk. Things like our people on oxygen, we've registered them with Energy Australia to make sure they have electricity. Somebody may be on Insulin all the time, this list is for people with very specific needs, like home dialysis. Sometimes we've had a whole page of people that we need to be aware of in this list.*

*This list is for simple things like people whose Webster packs we pick up. We have a 'back door' to the chemist down here and, in the Event he was helping us get the medications for our clients. The Emergency Services helped us deliver medications to people. We got meals across where the bridge had washed out. We were loading Meals On Wheels on the helicopter and lots of medications. So, it was coordinating those sorts of things. We must know which people are rostered, and whose medications are coming from different towns.*

*This list is all the clients and their details, and this is our live roster, two weeks in advance. And here is the completed Six Steps template.*

*That folder with all that information, sits offsite with me and with two other staff. There are three offsite copies and one in the admin office. I haven't put it in the fireproof safe, but I think it's highly unlikely that all the copies would be destroyed at once. It sits in the admin office and everybody knows where it is. We have the complete copies updated all the time, the offsite copies sit with me and two other staff members who could be capable to put [the plan] into action.*

*I wouldn't be able to guess how much time I've spent on it. Does buckets of time count?*

### Value and Effectiveness of the Six Steps Toolkit

The purpose of the Six Steps toolkit and resources it provides were well supported by the CSO's interviewed, however more than half of those who participated had not made substantive progress in implementation of the process. Only one organisation had reached the point of successfully completing a Business Continuity Plan. Specific feedback on the process and resources included in the Toolkit included:

- The Toolkit was widely supported, however suggestions included making it less overwhelming by changes to layout, but not by changing or shortening the content.
- Each of the six steps was recognised as relevant and essential in a BCP
- The online modules were too detailed for board members and staff timeframes, so were used only by 'resilience champions' (i.e. those staff actively driving the process in their organisation)
- The benchmarking survey was not well used but was well supported
- The Risk Register was difficult to engage with and lengthy. One organisation used an alternate, simpler risk register, others suggested a more user-friendly interface
- The template was a bit restrictive, for example some tables might have been better in landscape. However, this did not affect the organisation proceeding.

*It makes good business sense. For a start, if you manage risks you should have less concerns, less complaints, less a lot of things. It should make you be recognised as a provider who excels in their services.*

### Value and Effectiveness of the Facilitated workshops

Interviewees confirmed that they found value in the workshops, particularly because they initiated or reconfirmed their thinking about the need to build disaster resilience in their organisation. However, the need for more active and ongoing support was identified as being needed to ensure organisations remain motivated and keep moving forward to complete the Six Steps process. It was also noted that in some instances CSOs did continue to complete aspects of the Six Steps process, even though they weren't consciously following the process. Examples of this included connecting with local Emergency Service Providers and conducting an audit of insurance following the workshops. Specific feedback provided by CSOs interviewed included:

- The cross organisational (ie sub regional workshop) was productive for networking, and informing CSOs about their role in disaster resilience.
- The more targeted Six Steps workshops were productive for organisational “buy-in” and getting the “right people around the table”. However, these workshops were not directly linked with the successful completion of BCP's
- CSOs would benefit from ongoing support to develop and regularly review the Six Steps process and BCPs, which could potentially be provided through formal TAFE training, the resourcing of a “Community of Practice” or further workshops tailored to the needs of organisations.
- Ongoing “checking in” or mentoring by an external organisation or peak body would assist organisations to keep the Six Steps process moving
- The establishment of a “Diploma of Resilient Community Organisations” qualification would contribute to greater staff skills, capacity and commitment to undertake Business Continuity Planning within CSOs
- An external certification system for BCPs completed by CSOs would provide assurance that these plans have been developed to an appropriate standard.

### Key Stakeholders Influencing and Inhibiting CSO resilience Capability

In addition to specifically reviewing the activities, processes and resources piloted under the project, the in-depth interviews conducted have confirmed the substantial inherent capability of the community services sector to contribute to improved community disaster resilience and emergency management systems. This capability is both supported and inhibited by a range of internal and external factors:

#### *Supporting factors*

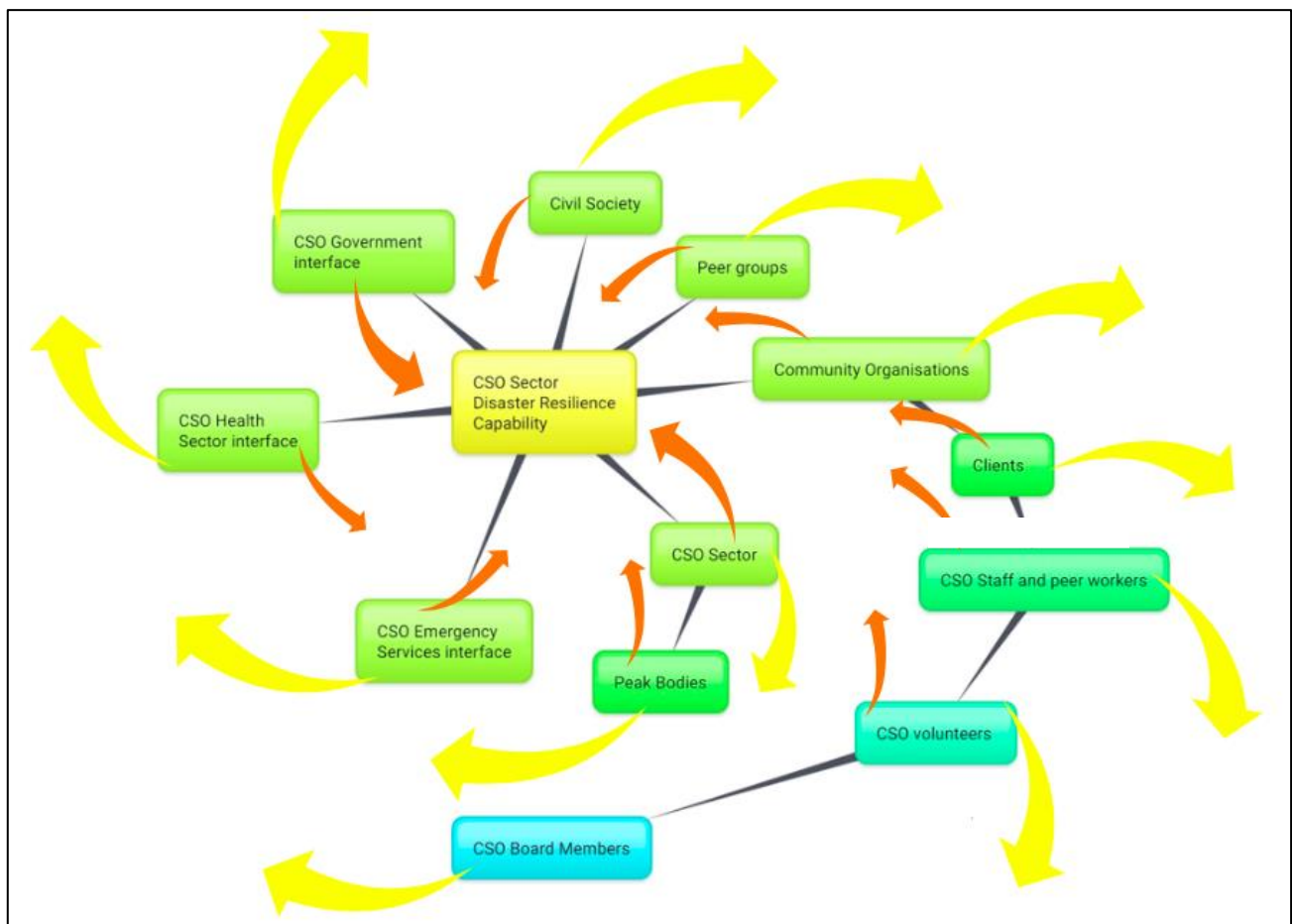
- Trust relationships and information with and between marginalised sectors of the community.
- Person centred skill sets throughout the sector which focus on a person and their strengths. These skills enable empowerment and capacity building which are central to resilience.
- Social capital which brings bonding, bridging and linking connections between community members both locally and distant and with institutional power (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000)
- Adaptability and crisis management skills across the workforce and client base.

- Compliance and transparency rigorously applied across diverse workplaces, providing quality assurance from ground level up
- Depth of connectivity and scope reducing the degrees of separation within communities. For example the nine organisations interviewed alone undertake 40,000 visits per annum to their clients. Multiplied out, the reach of the community services sector to vulnerable community members is profound.

#### *Inhibiting factors*

- Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is not part of the traditional scope of the community services sector, meaning that staff and clients may be resistant to taking on this role
- There is a skills deficit, absence of appropriate training modules and low impetus to implement training
- DRR is not included in funding agreements upon which the sector is heavily based. Given that funding is targeted toward service delivery, organisations struggle to justify the allocation of resources to disaster resilience initiatives
- There is no clearly defined role for the community services sector in the emergency management framework. As a result, if a CSO becomes involved in community response and recovery they could encounter barriers to their participation

*Figure 6. The social system contributes to and inhibits community services disaster resilience capability. \*Clockwise arrows signify DRR capability and counter-clockwise arrows signify inhibiting factors. Refer Appendix 2 for more detail of contributing and inhibiting factors.*



### 3 Discussion: Key findings of the Six Steps Project

Delivery of the “Six Steps to Resilience” project was promoted to thousands of individuals working in the community services sector across the Hunter and Central Coast region, including direct face to face presentations and engagement with over 200 representatives. Those CSO representatives who participated in project workshops and activities can therefore be considered among the most motivated in the sector in regard to having an interest in building the disaster resilience of their organisations. Despite this high level of motivation however, over the life of the project this translated to only one organisation successfully completing a Business Continuity Plan (refer Figure 7). This very low success rate indicates that there exist significant inhibiting factors to CSOs completing the Six Steps process.

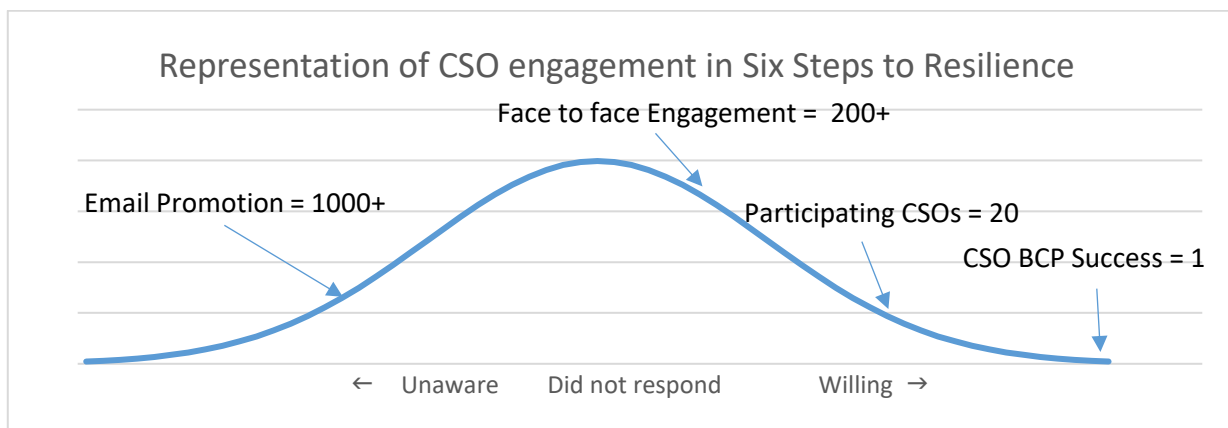


Figure 7: Project promotion compared to BCP success

Key findings identified from delivery of the project include:

- A very low success rate across organisations in completing a full business continuity plan indicates that there are significant inhibiting factors for community service organisations in completing the *Six Steps* process
- There existed comprehensive endorsement by Community Organisations of the *Six Steps* toolkit in its current form. No key changes to the toolkit itself were identified as being necessary
- The project has “shone a light” on the importance of the community service sector in disaster risk reduction and highlighted a need for urgent action and a whole of community approach to supporting community sector resilience.
- In the absence of a mandate and resourcing from their funding bodies, regardless of Board level leadership, organisations struggled to allocate scant resources to implement the “Six Steps” process.
- In the absence of the above factors, the key driver for undertaking the “Six Steps” process was a “resilience champion” in the organisation.
- The level of disaster preparedness activity in community organisations is closely related to previous experience of significant disaster impacts
- A reactive ‘hand on the hotplate’ disaster learning model (i.e. learning through direct experience of a disaster) is both undesirable and ineffective for broad scale sectoral change



- The focus, scope and capability of community organisations is highly relevant to building community disaster resilience. The sector can play a pivotal role in supporting emergency management, state and local government authorities partner with vulnerable community members in disaster Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PPRR). Without the involvement of the community services sector, authorities will not have the capability or specific skill sets required to effectively engage and support these audiences to the level required during an emergency
- A mandated and resourced role for community service organisations, such as within the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIIMS), has potential to improve disaster management outcomes
- Improved knowledge within Local Government and Emergency Management Authorities of which community service organisations are operating locally would enhance the capability to quickly communicate with people who are vulnerable via their established communication and support networks.
- Community Service Organisation staff require training and empowerment at all levels to establish effective disaster resilience work practices.
- Established small and medium place-based not-for-profit community service organisations support the concept of collaborative models to work with others in the sector to improve disaster planning and capability. Recent industry changes that have established a privatised, decentralised and more competitive industry however, have created barriers to collaboration of this nature.

These findings are well-matched with the growing body of local and international knowledge of the vital role of community service sector in disaster risk reduction throughout the ‘prevent, prepare, respond and recover’ (PPRR) disaster cycle. They are consistent with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience assertion that the community sector is “*critical to helping communities to cope with, and recover from, a disaster*”. However, the findings have identified that the CSO sector needs still stronger support and partnerships to effect practical disaster resilience in the communities they serve.

Project findings are also consistent with findings from *Identifying Organisational Emergency Preparedness* (Llewellyn 2017), that networking is a challenge in the community services sector. Factors contributing to poor connectivity include interorganisational competition within the sector and the heavy operational focus of CSOs.

Findings also conclude that CSOs have Person Centred Practices adaptable to engage “at risk communities” (HCCREMS 2014) and deliver Llewellyn’s recommended “empowerment of clients as key decision makers” in both personal and organisational emergency planning.

They are also consistent with *Adapting the Community Sector for Climate Extremes* (Mallon, et. al., 2013), concurring with and extending the proposition that:

1. CSOs have a willingness and specialist skills to prepare for and respond to extreme events
2. CSOs face overwhelming barriers to increasing resilience including insufficient finance, skills gaps and scope clarity.

This report differed slightly in that organisational size and risk awareness were comparatively less significant, and that the most critical resilience activity indicator was experience of a major disruption.



The findings of the Hunter based “Six Steps to Resilience” project have also been echoed in other pilot initiatives in NSW that have funded community organisations to build resilience. These initiatives have also found that systemic changes including recognition, increased resourcing, multi-sector frameworks, sector level adaptation and protections for small and medium organisations are needed to overcome the barriers to increasing resilience by CSOs.

These findings are largely unsurprising, given that Mallon 2013, made twelve recommendations for improving disaster resilience in the community services sector, of which only the following two have largely been implemented to date:

- Developing resilience building tools that can be used by CSOs – Six Steps to Resilience
- Developing a benchmarking tool to measure CSO and sector progress toward resilience

At an overall level the community services sector are broadly addressing Australia’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through reducing poverty, reducing inequalities, and by increasing health and wellbeing and providing meaningful opportunities for work. As evidenced by an increasing array of research and literature and the experiences of CSOs however, there is a clear need to support the community services sector to address the systemic barriers they face in developing DRR and resilience plans.

## 4 Stakeholder-specific recommendations to increase organisational capability and resilience

The following recommendations have been derived directly from the experiences and advice communicated by the CSOs involved in the project evaluation process. From the perspective of these CSOs, implementation of the following recommendations would contribute to building the organisational capability and disaster resilience of the community services sector as a whole.

State and Commonwealth Governments	
Recommendation	Rationale
1. Provide resources and support to CSOs to engage in PPRR activities including BCP, training, preparedness, surge demand funding and contract variations to facilitate provision of response and recovery activities	Community organisations need resourcing and a mandate for DRR. If the community services sector are unable to continue operations there is high risk of death, injury and trauma and consequent costs
2. Work with Red Cross, disaster experienced CSOs and Response Agencies to establish AIIMS or other disaster response framework for Community Service Organisations	A framework of engagement will enable a coordinated response
3. Support (and possibly mandate) the establishment of place based “Shared Resilience Networks”	A networked community approach is central to effective emergency planning, community resilience and recovery
4. Provide resources / support to small and medium place based CSOs that have been operating over 10 years to complete and regularly review Business Continuity Plans	These organisations have high levels of social capital and the capacity to lead place-based resilience initiatives

Local Government	
Recommendation	Rationale
5. Local Emergency Management Committees to incorporate higher levels of engagement with CSOs, emergency authority community engagement groups and community members	Improved communication with and integration of CSOs and other groups of interest within local emergency management frameworks is an important strategy for building local community resilience
6. Acquire and regularly update information on CSOs and other groups of interest operating within the LGA, down to a postcode level.	It is important that emergency management teams can quickly access accurate and up to date contact information for organisations providing vital community services in their LGA

<b>Emergency Authorities (e.g. State Emergency Services, Rural Fire Services, and Police)</b>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
7. Establish and resource Community Engagement Groups	Groups of this nature would provide a valuable conduit to facilitate collaborative preparedness planning and disaster communications between agencies and the community.
8. Establish and maintain a database / register of CSOs operating in each postcode to facilitate the dissemination of direct emergency warnings	It is important that emergency management authorities can quickly access accurate and up to date contact information for organisations providing vital community services in their LGA.  Community Organisations are in contact with and supporting large numbers of people who may have additional needs in an emergency so they need to be informed early.
9. Partner with CSOs to understand risks and develop local emergency plans	Bringing together specialised knowledge in community services and the emergency management expertise of agencies has the potential to provide a fuller picture to inform the development of local emergency plans
10. Partner with other agencies, CSOs and Community Groups to consolidate all-hazards emergency messaging	Community organisations and groups directly understand the communication needs and motivations of their client groups. Collaboration between CSOs and agencies can ensure that the design of All-Hazards education programs and materials reflect client needs, reduce engagement-fatigue (arising from multiple communications from multiple agencies) and provide for unforeseen emergencies.

<b>Training and Development Organisations (e.g. Universities, NSW TAFE, RTOs and Training Standards Australia)</b>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
11. Develop a nationally accredited “Diploma of Resilient Community Organisations” qualification. The qualification could include a student ‘Community of Practice’ and student placements in CSOs.	To build the community sector’s skills and capability to establish and regularly review their business continuity planning processes. CSOs would benefit from an externally facilitated round-table planning format which could be facilitated by student placements.
12. Develop ‘Person-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction’ learning modules available to all Cert III and Cert IV welfare and community services TAFE students	These qualifications would ensure that workforce entrants are equipped with necessary skills and ideas for embedding disaster preparedness within their roles.
13. Develop and implement online training packages targeted for different	To facilitate wholistic organisation-wide DRR knowledge and empowerment

<b>Training and Development Organisations (e.g. Universities, NSW TAFE, RTOs and Training Standards Australia)</b>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
organisational roles using the Six Steps learning modules and Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction as the foundation	
14. Develop a certification system for completed BCPs	A quality standard will create a benchmark and motivate community organisations to comply

<b>Peak Bodies (e.g. including Australian Council of Social Services, Local Community Services Association, National Disability Services, Youth Action, and Aged and Community Services Australia)</b>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
15. Inform CSOs of their key role in emergency Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery and encourage participation in Business Continuity Planning and skills development such as “Six Steps”, “Walk With” and Person-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction	Peak bodies are an important and trusted source of information for CSO’s. They provide an important avenue through which to raise awareness within CSOs of their role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.
16. Advocate for a funded mandate for CSOs to participate in emergency management frameworks	Without resourcing and a mandate, community organisations will face ongoing challenges in undertaking disaster planning
17. Establish and support CSO Communities of Resilient Practice and peak body mentors	Peak organisations are well places to facilitate peer to peer leaning, which can support cultural change and move the sector away ‘hand on the hotplate’ disaster learning
18. Establish peak body mentors to promote adoption of successful strategies across the sector	Community Organisations are exposed to common risks and can utilise common risk management strategies. Peak Body mentors could collate expertise to support individual organisations establishing Business Continuity Plans
19. Develop a database of completed BCPs	A library of example BCPs would be a useful reference for member organisations

<b>Community Service Organisations (e.g. Aged Care, NDIS Providers, CALD services, Family Support services, Meal Delivery services, Aboriginal services, Mental Health services and Homelessness Services)</b>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
20. Identify relevant local emergency management officers or suitable Council personnel and inform them regularly of	In an emergency we “go to who we know”. Establishing links with key people involved in emergency planning for areas where services are

**Community Service Organisations (e.g. Aged Care, NDIS Providers, CALD services, Family Support services, Meal Delivery services, Aboriginal services, Mental Health services and Homelessness Services)**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
locations / postcodes in which clients are located and services being provided.	provided will facilitate a flexible emergency planning and quick responses
21. Request to receive emergency warnings for active postcodes directly from emergency agencies	Community organisations support people who have additional needs in an emergency, emergency warnings provide early trigger points to enact effective emergency response for staff and clients
22. Prioritise a baseline resilience review and select a few priority actions to get started with Six Steps to Resilience within current capacity	While CSOs may struggle to complete Business Continuity Plans without resourcing and mandates from funding agencies, planning to continue care for staff and clients in an emergency remains a priority
23. Strengthen networks and learn from other CSOs' disaster experiences and preparedness activities	Peer to peer learning is an effective means through which to facilitate cultural change and knowledge transfer.
24. Partner with Emergency Agencies to understand risks and develop local emergency plans	Bringing together specialised knowledge in community services and the emergency management expertise of agencies has the potential to provide a fuller picture to inform the development of local emergency plans
25. Consider integrating client, staff and hazard mapping into client and staff databases	The ability to access accurate information on the location of clients can be critical in emergency situations
26. Consider alternate ways to access data and communicate with staff and clients in an emergency	Information and communication is critical in emergency situations. Given that mainstream communication channels may be offline in an emergency, having contingency plans in place can be critical.

**Public and Private Sector Organisations**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
27. Complete a Business Continuity Plan	Disaster ready organisations (whether private or public) have the potential to significantly support local emergency response and recovery efforts. For example, the provision of meals when electricity and other essential utilities are off line.
28. Identify each relevant local emergency management officer and Emergency Agency Community Engagement Groups, or suitable alternative and nominate as a disaster-ready organisation	Corporate information, skills, equipment and products can all form part of a community emergency response plan. Providing information on the kinds of services a company can offer before a disaster can ensure they

Public and Private Sector Organisations	
Recommendation	Rationale
	can be quickly accessed and brought online when needed.

Community members including Community groups, Peer Groups and Advocacy Groups (e.g. Council for Intellectual Disability, Community Disability Alliance Hunter, Men's Sheds, Lions Clubs, Country Women's Association, sporting clubs, church groups, informal peer groups and social media administrators)	
Recommendation	Rationale
29. Encourage members to connect with neighbours	Local relationships improve quality of life every day as well as in an emergency. Establishing networks and connections through everyday activities and communication can be a positive step towards disaster preparedness
30. Register as an interested person or group with local emergency management representatives and Emergency Agency Community Engagement Groups (or suitable alternatives)	Community groups are trusted by large networks of people and can provide an essential bridge of information for members in emergency preparedness and response activities.
31. Review preparedness messaging of emergency agencies and enact if suitable. Engage with agencies about improvements to preparedness messaging	Because community organisations and groups understand members' communication needs and motivations they can collaborate with emergency agencies to improve message clarity

## 5 References

- ACOSS. (2015). Resilient community organisations. Retrieved from <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps>
- Council of Australian Governments. (2011). *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience: building the resilience of our nation to disasters*. Council of Australian Governments. Retrieved from [http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national\\_strategy\\_disaster\\_resilience.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national_strategy_disaster_resilience.pdf)
- Deloitte Access Economics. (2017). *Building resilience to natural disasters in our states and territories*. Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safe Communities. Retrieved from [http://australianbusinessroundtable.com.au/assets/documents/ABR\\_building-resilience-in-our-states-and-territories.pdf](http://australianbusinessroundtable.com.au/assets/documents/ABR_building-resilience-in-our-states-and-territories.pdf)
- Department of Home Affairs. (2018). *National disaster risk reduction framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-disaster-risk-reduction-framework.pdf>
- Howard, A., Blakemore, T., Bevis, M. (2014). *Identifying risk perceptions, level of preparedness and communication channels for 'at risk' communities in respect to natural disasters*. HCCREMS, Hunter Councils. Retrieved from <https://www.hccrems.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/disaster-preparedness-in-at-risk-groups-final.pdf>
- Llewellyn, G., Dominey-Howes, D., Villeneuve, M. and Brooks, H. (2017). *Identifying organisational emergency preparedness: A field test report on the application of the Australian Council of Social Services, Resilient Community Organisations toolkit*. The University of Sydney's Hazards Research Group (HRG) and Centre for Disability Research and Policy (CDRP). Retrieved from <https://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/cdrp/projects/Field%20Test%20report%20on%20application%20of%20RCO.pdf>
- Mallon, K., Hamilton, E., Black, M., Beem, B. & Abs, J. (2013). *Adapting the community sector for climate extremes: Extreme weather, climate change & the community sector – risks and adaptations*. National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast, 286 pp. Retrieved from [https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached\\_files\\_publications/Mallon\\_2013\\_Adapting\\_community\\_sector.pdf](https://www.nccarf.edu.au/sites/default/files/attached_files_publications/Mallon_2013_Adapting_community_sector.pdf)
- UN General Assembly. (2015, October 21). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1. Retrieved from [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (2015). *Paris Agreement*. Retrieved from [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf)
- United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2015). *Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015-2030*. UNISDR. Retrieved from [https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291\\_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf)
- Woolcock, M. & Narayan, D. (2000) Social capital: Implications for development theory, research, and policy. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 15( 2) ABI/INFORM Global. p225-249



# Appendix 1 – Sub Regional Workshop Promotional Flyer

## 6 Steps to Resilience

*Preparing Community Organisations  
for Natural Disasters*



### SUB-REGIONAL FORUM

### Are you and your clients Disaster Ready?

**DATE:** Wednesday 14 March, 2018

**TIME:** 9.00am – 2.30pm

**VENUE:** Wallsend Diggers, 5 Tyrrell St, Wallsend.

Natural hazards such as bushfire, flood and severe storms are a well known part of our landscape, with a natural disaster being declared on average, every seven months in NSW. The 2016/17 summer saw record breaking heatwaves and catastrophic fire danger days, while the north east of the State is still cleaning up from the aftermath of severe storms. These events are becoming more frequent and intense as the climate changes. Natural disasters can directly affect your organisation and your **Duty of Care** to your clients.

*Can your service still function with...*

- ☐ Loss of power, communication or supplies for extended periods?
- ☐ Damaged offices or essential work areas?
- ☐ Clients requiring additional services or assistance?
- ☐ Clients being socially or physically isolated (from care) by the event?
- ☐ Increased staff absenteeism during and after a disaster event?

If you can't put a ✓ in each box you need to attend this session!

Australian research has found that the **community sector** is highly **vulnerable** and **unprepared** for extreme weather events and natural disasters including;

- 50% of organisations would be **unable to operate** for at least a week if their service centre or offices were severely damaged and;
- 25% of organisations reported that damage caused by such an event could lead to their **permanent closure**.

This forum will assist your organisation to begin a **Business Continuity Plan** to make it resilient to disaster.

It is the first of 4 workshops (the next 3 delivered in conjunction with Interagency events) whereby CSOs will be assisted through the planning process. At the end of which your service will have a practical plan that can be immediately implemented when the next severe weather event occurs.

The attendance of **Frontline staff** at this event is essential as they have the intimate knowledge of their clients and are vital in the planning process to ensure practical and achievable plans are developed.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

**Ian Turnbull** | Regional Project Manager – Disaster Resilience  
Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils  
(02) 4978 4042 | 0437 177 958 | [iant@huntercouncils.com.au](mailto:iant@huntercouncils.com.au)  
[www.hccrems.com.au](http://www.hccrems.com.au)

*Funded under the joint State and Commonwealth  
Natural Disaster Resilience Program*

Hunter  
Joint Organisation  
of Councils



**GET READY**  
For disasters



# 6 Steps to Resilience

*Preparing Community Organisations  
for Natural Disasters*



## PROGRAM

TIMING	FOCUS	RESPONSIBILITY
9.00 – 9.30am	Registration & morning tea on arrival	All
9.30 – 9.45am	Welcome & Introductions	Ian Turnbull - Hunter JOC
9.45 – 10.15am	Community Service Organisations and Disasters	Kellie Caught – ACOSS Karl Mallon - Climate Risk
10.15 – 10.30am	Client risk perceptions to extreme events	Steve Wilson – Hunter JOC
10.30-10.50	Break	
10.50am – 12.00pm	Risk Register Workshop	Climate Risk All
12.00 – 12.45pm	Risk Exploration Discussion	Climate Risk /ACOSS All
12.45 – 1.15pm	Lunch	
1.15 – 1.45pm	Solution identification	Climate Risk/Hunter JOC All
1.45 – 2.30pm	Wrap Up and Homework	Hunter JOC
2.30pm	Forum Close	

## Registration

To register your participation please use the following link:

<http://www.hccrems.com.au/6-steps-resilience-sub-regional-forum-lower-hunter/>

by 5.00pm Wednesday 7 March 2018.

### MORE INFORMATION:

**Ian Turnbull** | Regional Project Manager – Disaster Resilience  
Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils  
(02) 4978 4042 | 0437 177 958 | [iant@huntercouncils.com.au](mailto:iant@huntercouncils.com.au)  
[www.hccrems.com.au](http://www.hccrems.com.au)

*Funded under the joint State and Commonwealth  
Natural Disaster Resilience Program*

Hunter  
Joint Organisation  
of Councils



**GET READY**  
For disasters

## Appendix 2 –Inhibiting and Contributing factors to CSO Disaster Resilience Capability

### People experiencing crisis, disadvantage or vulnerability influence

People experiencing crisis, disadvantage or vulnerability are often supported by CSOs.

**Clients contributing to CSO capability:** Clients are key partners with CSO's in building resilience. Their diverse strengths and capabilities constitute significant resilience. There are noteworthy trust relationships between clients and CSOs

**Clients inhibiting CSO capability:** Some clients don't perceive risk, "I'm fine". Many clients are not able to access relevant all-hazards messaging.

Interviewer: There's a space where your face to face workers could be doing plans using disability informed DRR'.

Manager: Why should we be doing that? Why should we be doing that on behalf of emergency services?"

Interviewer: Emergency services aren't likely to walk into 'Nelly's' house to do it with her.

Manager: We can't do it. If it's not embedded into the yearly review and if it's not a requirement for Aged Care Safety Standard, why should I be paying somebody to do that? But we are good people and we always pick up everybody else's gaps. There's a whole gap whether it's Aged Care or Neighbourhood Centre, our clients have a different mindset - 'We'll grab the TV to evacuate with' - there is a huge gap.

In Home Care, I don't think we are as aware and pro-active as we should be, and if we could be discussing with clients in a bushfire area and cleaning out guttering. Even registering with emergency services, I think we could do that better.

### Peer groups influence the CSO sector's Disaster Resilience capability

Peer groups are networks of people who may also be experiencing crisis, disadvantage or vulnerability. They are especially dynamic on social media in mental health, CALD and deaf communities.

**Peer groups contributing to CSO capability:** Peer groups are key partners with CSOs in building resilience. They provide quality relationship webs between vulnerable people and use suitable communication styles. These groups offer flexible, all-hours mutual support and problem-solving and could be activated to promote preparedness and aid in emergency response.

**Peer groups inhibiting CSO capability:** Peer groups and networks are often unseen, even by CSOs, let alone disaster management agencies or local government, they are not typically engaged in resilience conversations. Peer Groups need to be actively sought out and engaged.

## CSO Volunteers

**CSO Volunteers contributing to CSO capability:** CSO Volunteer workforces have a broad reach, they are a veritable army in some cases. People work on their own time yet, are reliable and committed. Through their quality relationships with vulnerable people and spirit of volunteerism, they contribute key elements of Social Capital. They have compliance such as Police Checks and food handling which means they could be effectively mobilised in times of emergency

**CSO Volunteers inhibiting CSO capability:** CSO Volunteer workforces lack both DRR training and an emergency response framework. Volunteers are becoming harder to replace due to the ageing population and changing economic conditions. One of the limiting factors is the need for volunteers who are willing, available and capable – all necessary factors to be an effective volunteer.

## CSO Staff

**CSO Staff contributing to CSO capability:** CSO staff are a capable, competent Person-Centred workforce with specialist skill sets such as social work, case management, psychology, Mental health First Aid, adaptability, crisis response, personal care, cleaning, specialist transport, volunteer management, home repairs, food service and reporting. They have ongoing relationships with vulnerable people and work in people's homes as well as from trusted community centres. Staff often work nights and weekends. They are compliant and generally qualified with WWCs, Police Checks, food handling, and Certificate III and above.

**CSO Staff inhibiting CSO capability:** CSO staff are generally a part time/casual/low paid workforce. In some instances, there are high turnover and burnout rates. With prescriptive work roles and minimal time allocated per client, staff generally can't engage in Disaster Risk Reduction. They are not trained, lack flexibility, time and clear response pathways.

## CSO Board members

**CSO Board Members contributing to CSO capability:** Board members are well networked, upstanding community members. Board members are a bridge between the most vulnerable people in a community and broader social systems. Board Members offer insight into the networks operating within communities and can channel resource for more vulnerable community members.

**CSO Board Members inhibiting CSO capability:** Board members may not understand relevance of disaster resilience, and they may not approve DRR activities as it is not in funding agreements

## CSO Organisations

**CSO Organisations contributing to CSO capability:** CSOs give *support* and exercise duty of care to clients every day. This capacity could logically extend to clients in emergency situations. They are bound by a culture of Person-Centred Practice and relevant legislation such as *Disability Services Act* and *Aged Care Act*. Compared to other sectors, CSOs have the highest proportion of trust relationships with people experiencing crisis, disadvantage or vulnerability. Some organisations have very high levels of local knowledge and investment in social capital, particularly in regional areas.

The organisations manage risk and handle crisis daily. They maintain contact lists with community members experiencing crisis, disadvantage or vulnerability. They are already writing emergency plans with people experiencing crisis, disadvantage or vulnerability, including gathering emergency contacts. Through interfacing CSOs provide referral with health and other community services such as allied health, pharmacy, government, and food providers. The workforce is embedded in communities and has expertise in Person-Centred skill-sets which are also suited to supporting people in crisis and recovery because of an emergency.

**CSO Organisations inhibiting CSO capability:** There are profound barriers resulting in preparedness generally only occurring following experience of a disaster. Resilience is not traditionally part of organisational scope, it is neither funded nor in service agreements. Funding covers face to face services, not compliance activities or disaster resilience. This means that in a competitive funding market, despite a willingness to act, resilience can often slip down the priority list.

CSOs do not have a 'seat at the table' in emergency planning. Disaster response frameworks and surge capacity funding are not available. There are skills shortages and lack of adequate training in Business Continuity Planning and Person Centred Disaster Risk Reduction. These gaps could all be addressed to facilitate a huge acceleration in CSO resilience capability to the benefit of the whole community.

## CSO Sector

**CSO Sector contributing to CSO capability:** The CSO sector represents many organisations with astounding cumulative reach and capacity. There is a good opportunity to learn and increase resilience as a sector through networking and collaboration. Peak bodies such as Sector Support Development Officers, Local Community Services Association and NDIA can communicate to organisations throughout the sector.

**CSO Organisations inhibiting CSO capability:** Sector volatility, such as changes to funding, compliance, NDIS and My Aged Care have resulted in structural upheaval across the sector. Organisations are restructuring and modernising to comply and compete, leaving little or no resource for resilience activities. The competitive funding model has resulted in a 'Big-fish little fish' dynamic, where large for-profit organisations utilise economies of scale so many small and medium sized organisations have been overtaken or face challenges to survive. This has increased vulnerability because long term place-based organisations which hold innate local knowledge and social capital can be lost, resulting in an increase of drive-in-drive-out workers, lowering levels of local knowledge and social capital. Elevated sector competition has resulted in intensification of 'siloing' and 'protection of turf' which is an inhibiting factor for Step 2 "Networking", which is essential to effective Community Organisation Business Continuity Planning.

Individual entities, whether profit or not for profit will all need to work through the Six Steps. It needs to be area wide. A little geographically specific service is not going to make all those changes, so ACOSS need to go in and suggest there is a huge gap in managing disasters, to develop communication plans between services. There needs to be work into recovery, not just the initial phase. Neighbourhood centres are the best placed people to do some of that work, we already have referral processes, trained staff, presence on ground, we've got processes and people who are compliant. But we need money.

## Emergency Management Sector

**Emergency Management Agencies contributing to CSO capability:** Emergency agencies have potential to contribute specialist knowledge to increase CSOs' Risk Awareness while CSOs and Peer Groups have potential to better educate Emergency Service workers about Person Centred Practice. These groups have potential to collaborate to prepare suitable all-hazards resilience messages targeted for vulnerable locations and populations. Emergency agencies and CSOs have potential to collaborate to do Prevention and Preparedness with vulnerable populations and establish capacity to go 'operational' in Response and Recovery situations

**Emergency Management Agency inhibiting CSO capability:** Local Emergency Management planning is not formerly connected with CSOs, and emergency agencies typically do not have databases of CSOs supporting vulnerable people in their operational areas. Without a whole of society approach including childcare, fuel supply chains, health care, emergency response volunteer groups, private sector and faith groups as active stakeholders CSOs and emergency agencies will be under-resourced for disaster planning and response.

## Health providers

**Health Sector Providers contributing to CSO capability:** There are established relationships between CSOs and health providers such as nursing, pharmacy, allied health workers. Through informal collaboration in this interface, clients have been provided medications in emergency situations.

**Health Sector providers inhibiting CSO capability:** There is no systematic collaborative emergency planning between Health and CSO's such as client emergency medication and evacuation plans, but there is potential to strengthen this interface for effective emergency planning and response.

## State and Federal Governments

**State and Federal Governments contributing to CSO capability:** State and Federal governments are the primary funders for community services, and enable the community sector to provide services. Audits and governance requirements provide the sector transparency and accountability.

**State and Federal Governments inhibiting CSO capability:** Inflexible funding arrangements and bureaucratic processes can limit community-appropriate CSO response flexibility. CSOs are not included in emergency management round tables, for example the AAIMS framework has no role for CSOs. Funding for disaster response CSO surge capacity is lacking, even though these organisations and workforces are ideally placed to support their clients and the broader community in response and recovery.

A certification system for CSOs with completed Business Continuity Plans could provide additional incentive and quality assurance. Funding and audit structures lack incentive for CSOs to conduct Prevention and Preparedness activity internally and in their communities.