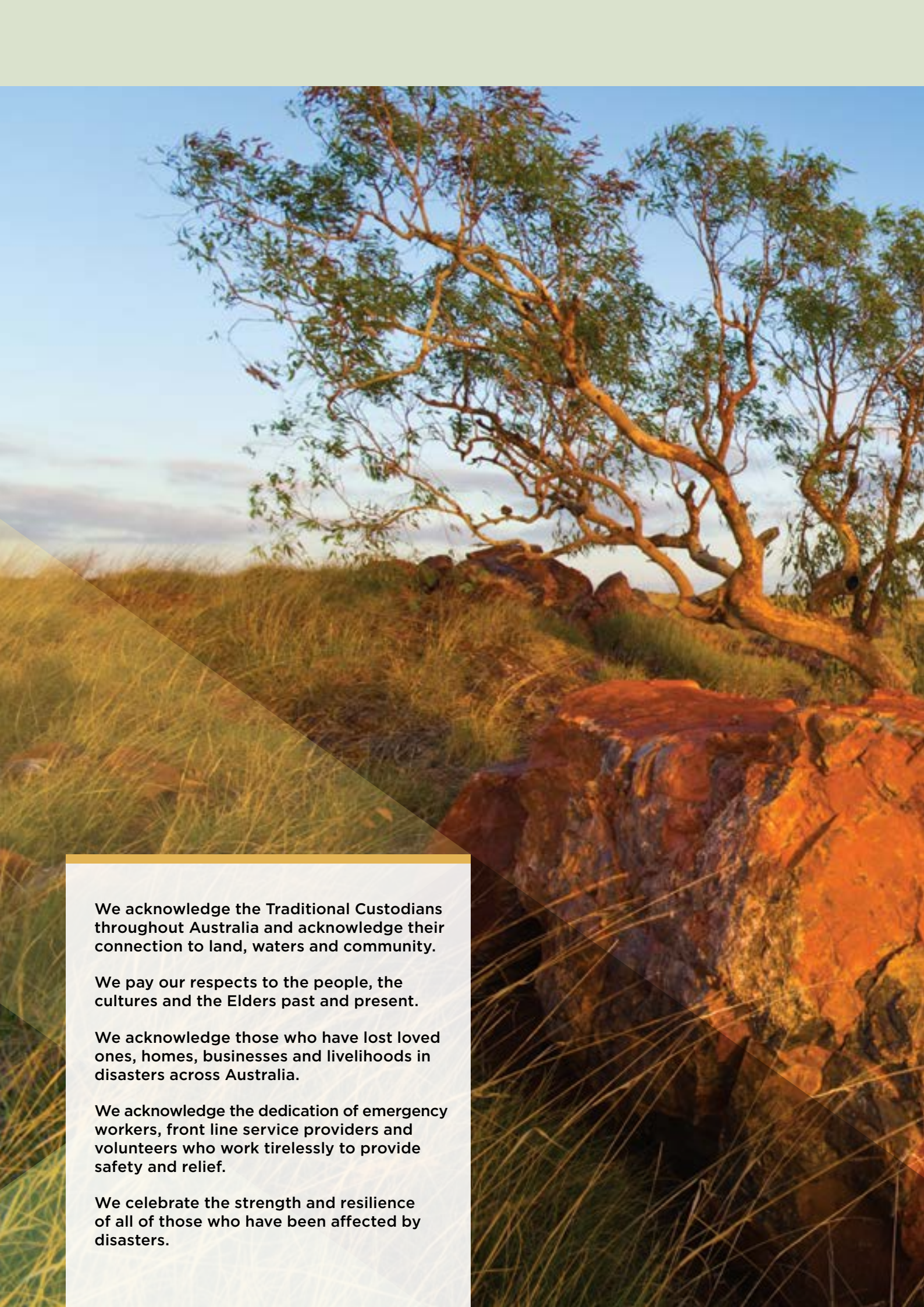




National Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment Guidelines

Principles and processes for nationally compatible approaches to support the design and implementation of community recovery needs assessment.

Version 1.0 March 2024



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians throughout Australia and acknowledge their connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.

We acknowledge those who have lost loved ones, homes, businesses and livelihoods in disasters across Australia.

We acknowledge the dedication of emergency workers, front line service providers and volunteers who work tirelessly to provide safety and relief.

We celebrate the strength and resilience of all of those who have been affected by disasters.



Acknowledgements

These guidelines have been developed and advanced with the support of disaster recovery professionals across Australia, and Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-Committee (CORS) members.

Document information and version control

Endorsed by the Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee on 6 July 2023.

Endorsed by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee on 3 November 2023.

Document sponsor:	Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC)
Document owner:	Community Outcomes and Recovery Sub-committee (CORS)
Document custodian:	National Emergency Management Agency Australia (NEMA [Au])
Document author:	Version 1.0 prepared by Queensland Reconstruction Authority as Project Lead for the CORS
Document management:	These guidelines will be reviewed annually for essential updates. Extraordinary amendments or considerations for future revision can be discussed by contacting: nationalrecoveryprojects@nema.gov.au



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1. Introduction



1.1 Definitions

For the purposes of the National Disaster Recovery Needs Assessments Guidelines (the Guidelines), and to ensure disaster recovery needs assessments are supported with standardised terminology and agreed definitions, recovery needs and recovery needs assessment are defined below.

Table 1: Recovery needs and recovery needs assessment (NEMA [Au], 2022)

Recovery needs	Requirements that address the ever-evolving, unique consequences of a disaster, on both an immediate and long-term timescale, informing the prioritisation of recovery efforts. Requirements to support an individual’s emotional, spiritual, cultural, psychological, social wellbeing, as well as basic needs (including health and shelter).
Recovery needs assessment	The ongoing process of collecting a wide range of information from disaster affected communities to provide both recovery practitioners and decision makers a timely understanding of these needs to inform and adapt recovery programs and strategy.

A more comprehensive list of terms is available in the Glossary (section 8).



1.2 Purpose

The Guidelines are nationally compatible approaches that support the design and implementation of disaster recovery needs assessments by providing principles and processes that:

- Clarify the important distinction between disaster *impact* assessments, disaster *consequence* assessments and disaster *recovery needs* assessments
- Detail the different types of disaster recovery needs assessments
- Explain why and how to undertake disaster recovery needs assessments
- Identify recovery needs across the four recovery domains
- Assist with collecting, analysing and sharing assessment needs data.

The Guidelines:

- Link recovery needs assessments with recovery program design
- Deliver a set of national principles and processes for undertaking a needs assessment with practical methods for information gathering and use.

Drawing on best practice and guidance used by recovery practitioners, the Guidelines may support jurisdictions within their existing recovery arrangements and may contribute to a nationally consistent way of collecting recovery-related data.

The Guidelines take into account the impact of compounding events as well as ongoing and evolving recovery needs and will help identify where there are gaps and challenges in the collection of this information.

The Guidelines draw upon existing guidance for conducting recovery needs assessments including the **Australian Red Cross Needs Assessment and Psychosocial Support after Emergencies** and the **Australian Institute of Family Studies Needs Assessment**.

The Guidelines seek to complement these frameworks rather than duplicate existing tools. The process of developing the Guidelines will also enhance the National Impacts Assessment Framework Data Dictionary, with a focus on recovery needs and consequence definitions.

1.3 Audience

The Guidelines are not intended to take the form of a standard operating procedure and are not expected to be used in each jurisdiction. The Guidelines are intended to assist recovery practitioners in the design and implementation of recovery needs assessments. This includes policy makers and practitioners working across national, state and territory, and local levels of government.

The Guidelines may also support:

- Official government emergency management and disaster recovery agencies and/or services at every jurisdictional level
- Non-government organisations (NGOs) including emergent groups established in response to the disaster
- Community leaders and members of community-based groups.

1.4 Scope

The Guidelines apply to all recovery domains and to all types and scales of disasters including cascading and compounding events – acknowledging that needs can be ongoing and evolving.

The Guidelines are specifically tailored to guide the assessment of community recovery needs, noting that communities vary in nature (for example rural and remote, urban or regional, large or small), and have diverse needs and capacities when recovering from a disaster.

Development of the Guidelines has drawn on evidence-based recovery principles and resources including:

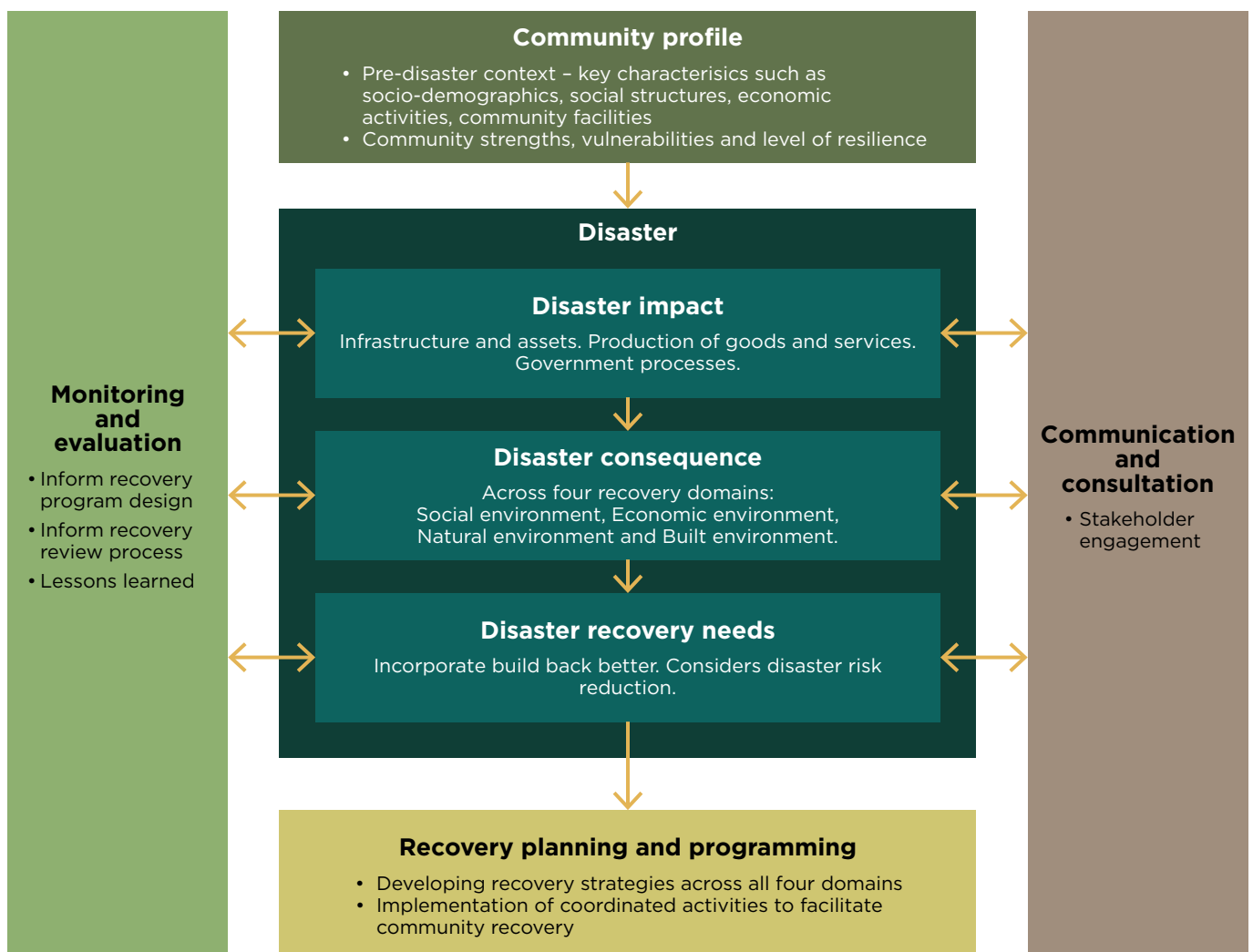
- **Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) Community Recovery Handbook**
- **National Principles for Disaster Recovery**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs**
- **Australian Disaster Recovery Framework**
- **Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals.**

2. Types of disaster recovery assessments

Disaster impacts, consequences and needs are interconnected and compounding. To ensure effective disaster recovery assessments are undertaken, it is important to understand the distinction between disaster *impact* assessments, disaster *consequence* assessments, and recovery *needs* assessments. A detailed definition of each is provided in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

For context, Figure 1 – Disaster Recovery Assessment Cycle (DRAC) illustrates the components of the DRAC and their relationship to one another.

Figure 1: Disaster Recovery Assessment Cycle. Adapted from AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management – Guidelines





2.1 Disaster Impact Assessment

Disaster Impact Assessments (DIAs) are used to improve preventative measures and response and recovery programs, which can help mitigate impacts of future disasters.

In the response and recovery phases they promote understanding of the impacts and consequences of disasters over time.¹

DIAs assess impacts that are the direct result of a disaster. Disaster impacts may be localised and immediate, or more widespread and gradual. How the impacts present will vary depending on the disaster. For example: during a flood, the disaster impacts could be water inundation which results in crops being destroyed. DIAs do not provide a detailed understanding of recovery needs, particularly at the community level, however, they can provide an understanding of the initial activities required during recovery.

Disaster impacts can be observed and measured (e.g. building/infrastructure damage, morbidity, and mortality). It is important to assess both the tangible and intangible impacts of a disaster. Tangible impacts are those that can be measured in monetary terms such as destruction of property, buildings or infrastructure.² Examples of intangible impacts include loss or damage to cultural artefacts, losses of memorabilia, environmental impacts and psychological effects).³ The types of impact data collected may be guided by the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* reporting data.

Note: A DIA differs from a Rapid Impact Assessment (RIA) which is usually conducted in the immediate aftermath of a disaster (when the area is accessible and safe to approach). An RIA is a point in time assessment to obtain an understanding of the immediate impacts of a disaster. This may include information on affected people and their immediate needs, damage to property, the environment and infrastructure. It is generally conducted by emergency services workers, first responders, relief and recovery workers. RIAs provide a baseline to complete a more holistic DIA.

2.2 Disaster Consequence Assessment

Disaster Consequence Assessments (DCA) assess the consequences of a disaster across the recovery domains – social environment, economic environment, natural environment and built environment. The DCA goes beyond the initial impacts of a disaster, and looks at the consequences the impacts caused by the disaster. For example: flooding that has resulted in crops being destroyed, the consequences are not solely relevant to the owner of the crops but may also have consequences for export markets, supply chains and increased prices for, and decreased access to, fresh produce for consumers. Such consequences can be challenging to assess as they are often hidden, hard to measure and sometimes intangible.

Addressing the gaps in disaster consequence is significantly more challenging than addressing those of disaster impact. For disaster consequence, the situation is primarily a knowledge gap rather than a data gap (i.e. a limited understanding of how complex interconnected socio-economic, built and ecological systems work).

1 Lauge et al, (2023), *Disaster Impact Assessment: A Holistic Framework*, p. 730

2 Lauge et al, (2023), *Disaster Impact Assessment: A Holistic Framework*, p. 731

3 Lauge et al, (2023), *Disaster Impact Assessment: A Holistic Framework*, p. 731

2. Types of disaster recovery assessments (continued)

2.3 Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment

A Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment (DRNA) is a critical component of managing recovery programs. DRNAs identify specific impacts, needs, available services and gaps in disaster affected communities. They must be dynamic to keep pace with the evolving situation. Effective needs assessments support recovery programs to be evidence based and tailored to the context and needs of the disaster affected communities. This includes consideration of pre-event context such as community profile, demographics and vulnerabilities. These assessments form part of the ongoing process of monitoring recovery programs. Needs are not static and evolve over time. As such, collection and analysis of data on disaster impact, consequence and recovery needs should be repeated over time so that changing community needs are understood and addressed.

DRNA is defined in more detail below in section 4.1.

Some examples of disaster *impacts*, disaster *consequences* and disaster recovery *needs* are provided below in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of disaster impacts, consequences and recovery needs

RECOVERY DOMAIN	IMPACT EXAMPLE	CONSEQUENCE EXAMPLE	RECOVERY NEEDS EXAMPLE
Social environment	Individuals impacted by the disaster experience a traumatic event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals suffer PTSD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased and better access to mental health support services such as free counselling
Economic environment	Damage or loss of food crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of income for farmers Export markets affected Price rises for consumers due to demand exceeding supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial support under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) Subsidies for affected farmers Increased financial support for low income earners
Natural environment	Surface or ground water contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undrinkable water supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water needs to be transported into affected areas
Built environment	Damage to energy infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in energy operating costs Increased costs passed onto the consumer with higher energy bills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance for energy bills via rebates/subsidies for the consumer Assistance to energy suppliers to assist with rebuilding or repairing

3. Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment and the Recovery Project Cycle

The Recovery Project Cycle involves a number of phases (Figure 2) including recovery needs assessment, planning/programming, implementation of services/activities, and continuous monitoring, and evaluation. Effective disaster recovery needs assessments enable the development of evidence-based recovery planning and programs that are tailored to meet the needs of disaster affected communities.

It includes pre-event context such as community profiles, demographics, socio-economic status and vulnerabilities.

Ongoing recovery needs assessments assist in providing a mechanism that is:

- ✓ Responsive to the dynamic nature of recovery needs
- ✓ Takes into account the needs and context of the community at different stages of their recovery
- ✓ Enables informed strategy and planning for long-term recovery
- ✓ Informs the development of effective recovery plans and programs which aim to increase community resilience
- ✓ Provides a foundation for recovery program evaluation.

Understanding the type, size, impact and consequences of a disaster event on a community will assist in highlighting their unique recovery needs. It is critical to understand the complexities of compounding impacts, including the interaction between the disaster event and long-term stressors on communities and individuals. Opportunities to build community resilience through the implementation of locally led recovery strategies that reduce the need for long-term support services, should be identified from the earliest phase of recovery planning.

Figure 2: The Recovery Project Cycle. Adapted from AIDR Community Recovery Handbook (2018).



4 . Preparing for a disaster recovery needs assessment

4.1 What is a Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment?

As Figure 2 above shows, a data-driven recovery needs assessment is seen as the first stage of the Recovery Project Cycle.⁴ As such they should be undertaken for all types and scales of events. It is important that the data collected is recorded and shared to inform a common operating picture, to improve decision-making, and to ensure the design and implementation of effective recovery and evaluation programs.

In practice, recovery needs assessment and planning/programming occur simultaneously. The process of communicating and coordinating with multiple stakeholders, during the planning process, identifies needs that in turn inform the recovery plan.

There are four key types of recovery assessments that can take place during the various stages of the Recovery Project Cycle:

Community profile provides an understanding of the community prior to a disaster. This will assist in the recovery planning and programming phase, and will help to ensure recovery programs recognise, support and build upon individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience. Undertaking a community profile captures a range of information including key characteristics relating to socio-demographics, political and social structures, economic activities, community facilities, local institutions, the natural environment, risk profiles, and available resources within the community.

Community profiles also identify pre-existing capabilities, capacities, vulnerabilities, and strengths, which are key to understanding the capacity and resilience of a community and will shape the scale and type of recovery needs it may require. It will also enable the development of recovery programs that include opportunities for disaster risk reduction, 'building back better' and identifying resilience outcomes.

Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) are aimed at getting a snapshot of the type and urgency of needs of those affected by a disaster. RNAs are usually conducted within one to two weeks of the disaster impact. Rapid response to (acute) needs helps to reduce further impact.⁵ RNAs gather information on the immediate needs and existing capacities of the affected populations, possible areas of intervention and resource requirements. The goal of an RNA is to gauge needs at a group level, not to make inferences about factors affecting individual recovery. Therefore, RNAs are able to include existing data about known risk and resilience factors in a community group. RNAs do not always need to collect new information about the key characteristics of the affected population as this information can be obtained from the Community Profile.⁶ An RNA is a precursor to a detailed needs assessment.

4 *A/DR Community Recovery Handbook*, Section 3.3.4 Recovery Project Cycle, p. 62

5 Bosmans et al, (2022), *A systematic review of rapid needs assessments and their usefulness for disaster decision making*

6 Bosmans et al, (2022), *A systematic review of rapid needs assessments and their usefulness for disaster decision making*



Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA) is a comprehensive information gathering process that examines in detail the needs arising as a result of a disaster. The purpose is to identify the needs requiring longer-term interventions and provide the data on which recovery programs for impacted community groups are designed. Conducting DNAs prior to the implementation of medium to long-term recovery programs will help to ensure those programs are appropriate to the real needs of the disaster affected communities. Failure to conduct such assessments could result in programs being implemented that are ineffective, do not meet current needs, or make the current situation worse. DNAs are a vital first step in the recovery planning process as they form part of the broader recovery planning and program design.

Continual Needs Assessment (CNA) occurs when recovery plans or programs have been implemented. Most commonly this is achieved through monitoring and evaluation processes. To do this effectively, key indicators or measures of success for each recovery action need to be identified and considered at the program design process. The **National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs**⁷ can assist with the program logic design of a community recovery program, focusing on resilience and sustainability outcomes from recovery actions/investments. It is important to remember, during multiple and compounding disasters, where there is an accumulation of impacts, new groups may emerge that have support needs. The fact that needs change over time highlights the importance of conducting continual needs assessments to evaluate whether the assistance provided is adequate.

⁷ The Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG), (2018), *A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs*

4. Preparing for a recovery needs assessment (continued)



Applying these indicators through monitoring and evaluation processes enables objective reflection on the selected interventions to ensure they are meeting the identified need and not creating additional unmet needs. These assessments enable the identification of additional emerging needs which can inform amendments to program delivery or act as a catalyst for creating new interventions/programs. The decision to implement amendments to existing programs or introduce additional programs rests with the body responsible for coordinating recovery activities.

Figure 3: the Correlation between needs assessment types





4.2 Why undertake disaster recovery needs assessments?

Needs assessments provide an evidence-informed approach for transparent, planned and systemic prioritisation and allocation of resources. Each needs assessment should build on the information collected, collated and analysed from the previous assessment. This will build a robust shared situational awareness of the social environment, economic environment, natural environment, and built environment domains that informs all stages of the recovery project cycle.

The data collected from a DRNA (within a specific location or community following an event/disaster/disruption) provides information to:

- Inform recovery planning
- Implement effective programs that are relevant, credible, and appropriate, adequately addressing current needs
- Advocate for funding or other forms of support
- Build relationships among stakeholders and build support for action⁸
- Contribute to citizen empowerment and community building⁹
- Provide baseline data for evaluation of recovery programs and policies and demonstration of funding outcomes
- To identify unmet and emerging needs.

As recovery needs are dynamic in nature and can evolve throughout different phases of recovery, the needs assessment process should be ongoing to ensure emerging needs are identified and understood.

4.3 Why is community-led important?

The concept of 'community-led' emphasises a community driven approach, the goal of which is strong community participation and leadership in all levels of planning, implementation and evaluation of the recovery process.¹⁰ A DRNA that actively involves the community will have a more comprehensive understanding of community needs and capacity. This supports the delivery of tailored recovery programs that are responsive to the context of the disaster and community; meeting current, emergent and future recovery needs. It can also strengthen relationships between community members and service providers. An important component of community-led assessment is the participation of people with lived experience and people with greater or specific risks (such as persons with disability, the elderly, children etc.). Those with lived experience can be a rich source of expertise, while the participation of people with greater risk will ensure that the DRNA is inclusive and accurately captures the needs of all community members.

It is also important to avoid contributing to 'consultation fatigue' where community members have been repeatedly approached on the same or similar issues without seeing tangible outcomes. Communicating with other agencies in the region and collaborating on a needs assessment, or sharing data, can be a better alternative to individual agencies conducting separate DRNAs¹¹.

8 Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), (2019), *Needs Assessment: Families and Children Expert Panel practice resource*, p. 3

9 AIFS, (2019), *Needs Assessment: Families and Children Expert Panel practice resource*, p. 3

10 AIFS, (2019), *Needs Assessment: Families and Children Expert Panel practice resource*, p. 8

11 AIFS, (2019), *Needs Assessment: Families and Children Expert Panel practice resource*, p. 8

5. Considerations when undertaking a Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment

Assessments enable recovery practitioners to gain an understanding of a situation, which assist in the identification of problems, their sources and consequences. The DRNA provides a summary of consequences to be addressed. It is important to remember that as a standalone document a DRNA does not create a recovery plan or strategy.

It is also important to note that when conducting DRNAs, information should be limited to issues that are essential to support recovery.

Some of the elements to consider when completing a DRNA include:

- Guiding approaches to engagement
- Community capacity
- Whose needs are to be considered
- Recovery domains and timespans
- The do's and don'ts
- Stakeholder engagement
- Data collection:
 - » Types of data
 - » Considerations for data collection
 - » Considerations for analysis
 - » Using the data
 - » Sharing data.

5.1 Guiding approaches to engagement

The following approaches should be adopted by disaster management practitioners when engaging with communities for the purpose of conducting DRNAs. These approaches are the hallmark of a quality DRNA. They emphasise the importance of participation and coordination – essential components in a successful recovery process. The approaches outlined below have been adopted from both national and international research and guidelines.

Humanity – Ensure human suffering is addressed where it is found, focusing on those with greatest need first, and respect is shown toward everyone involved without bias.¹²

Do no harm – Maximise the benefits and minimise the negative consequences of all implemented support mechanisms including the way data are collected. If there is no capacity to address some of the problems, then there is no need to collect data related to that issue.¹³

Impartiality – It is essential to provide impartial assistance based on the needs of communities and people affected by crisis, making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.¹⁴

Acknowledge bias – Be aware of the potential to have unconscious bias which may impact on the outcomes of the needs analysis process. Ensure mechanisms are implemented to overcome those biases.

12 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), (2012), *OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles*

13 Gurtner *et al*, (2011), James Cook University (JCU) *Pre & Rapid: Community Impact Assessment for Disaster Recovery*, p. 11

14 Social Recovery Reference Group (SRRG), *National Principles for Disaster Recovery*, p. 2



Coordination – Each phase of the Recovery Project Cycle (disaster recovery needs assessments, planning and programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) across the four recovery domains should be coordinated and complementary. Activities that are coordinated and complement one another tend to reach more people, meet more needs and are often more sustainable.

Participation – Maximising the participation of affected populations in recovery response leads to better outcomes. In most situations, significant numbers of people exhibit sufficient resilience to participate in recovery efforts. Where possible, recovery should be locally led, locally understood and locally implemented.

Empower individuals – Empowering affected people to meaningfully share their experiences and needs, as well as to influence recovery outcomes, is beneficial to both the individual and the community. Use the opportunity to get a better understanding of local dynamics, pre and post event, which will contribute to locally led recovery and build resilience. Recognise that new community leaders may often emerge during and after a disaster who may not hold positions of authority.

Community-led – Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible, engaging with community and supporting them to move forward. Ensure there are mechanisms in place to allow the community to lead the recovery, if they have capacity to do so.¹⁵

Capacity – Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience. Don't expect communities to lead recovery beyond their capacity to do so and ensure there is enough support available where required. Recognise that existing resources may be time limited and sustainability issues may need to be addressed.¹⁶

Multi-layered support – In disasters, people are affected in different ways and have different needs. A key to organising recovery efforts is to develop a layered system of complementary supports that meets the needs of different groups. This may be illustrated by a pyramid (see Figure 4). All layers of the pyramid are important and should ideally be implemented concurrently.¹⁷

Capture lessons – Ensure there are processes in place to capture the lessons identified during the needs assessment process. This should happen at each part of the Disaster Recovery Assessment Cycle and used to inform the next steps.

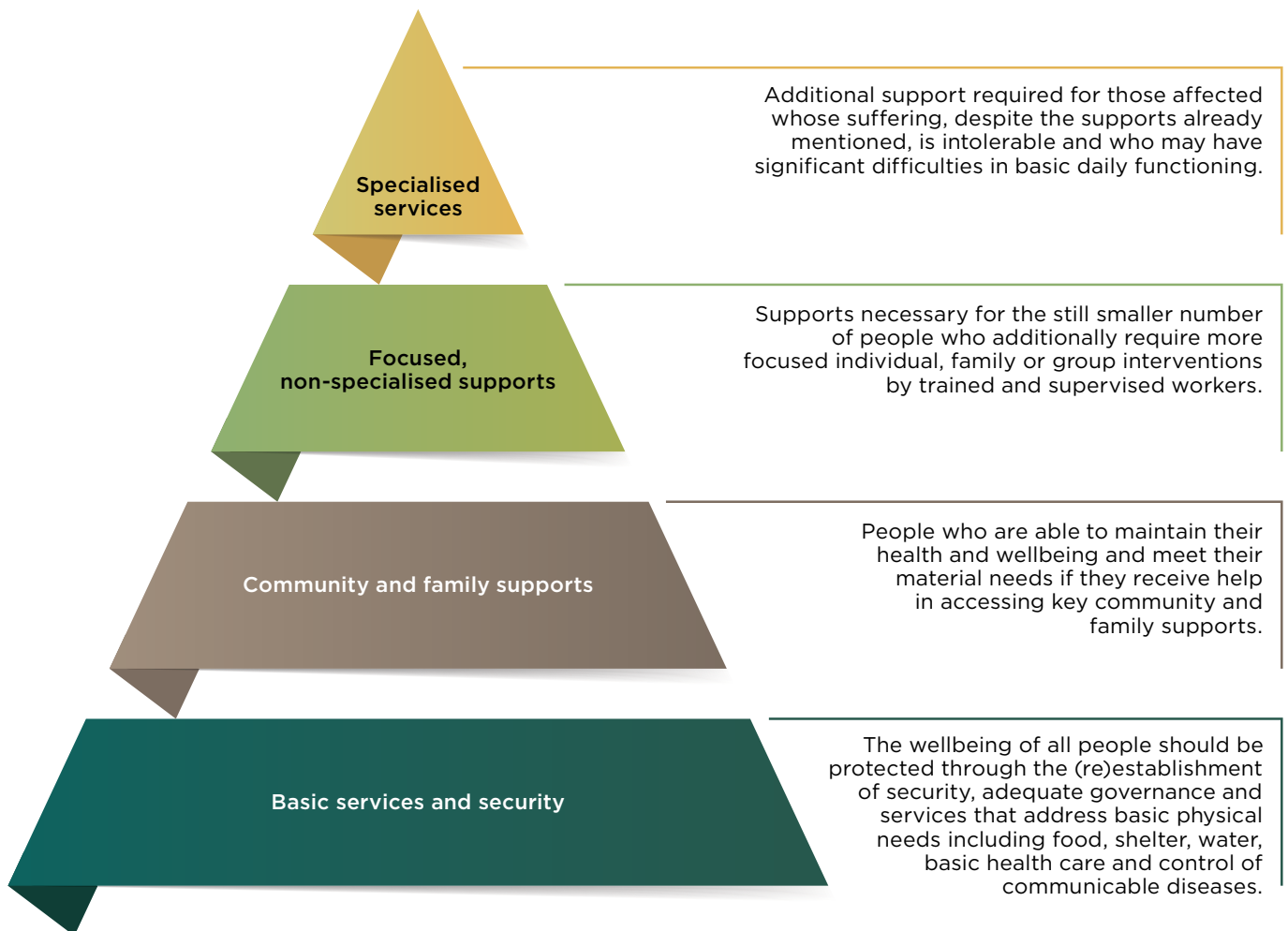
15 SRRG, *National Principles of Disaster Recovery*, p. 2

16 SRRG, *National Principles of Disaster Recovery*, p. 2

17 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), (2007), *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings*, p. 13

5. Considerations when undertaking a Recovery Needs Assessment (continued)

Figure 4: Intervention pyramid for support in disasters. Adapted from IASC's Intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, (2007), p. 12





5.2 Community capacity

Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience. When designing and implementing any type of needs assessment, there should be a focus on identifying existing capacities within communities. Recovery programs that utilise existing community skills, strengths and resources, and build community capacity and capability, produce more sustainable outcomes.¹⁸

One of the key issues for any community that has been affected by disaster, is the assessment of the capacity, capability and resilience of the community as it is found 'post-disaster'. An assessment done at this time, is likely to be inaccurate and distorted due to the combined impact of physical damage, disruption, shock and grief. Community profiles developed pre-disaster are an invaluable tool to support sustainable recovery outcomes and community resilience as they can assist in identifying community strengths including pre-existing capacity and capabilities.

5.3 Whose needs are to be considered?

Disasters do not affect individuals and communities equally. The same hazard can have significantly different impacts and outcomes for each person or group affected. The level of resilience in a community significantly influences the impact of the disaster, and subsequent recovery needs. The community profile, for example, can assist in identifying individuals and communities who may require more support in their recovery journey.

When assessing need, it is important to consider the consequences of the disaster event with the resilience capacity of individuals and their community. For example: a small event may hit a less-resilient community harder than a large event that impacts a highly resilient community. As such, the recovery needs for each affected group will vary.

When completing a DRNA it is important to understand whose needs are being assessed, how those needs interrelate with the broader needs of the community and any other groups, and any crossovers or gaps between the recovery domains. Failure to correlate the identified needs with recovery planning and programming activities, may lead to recovery interventions inadvertently creating further needs or disadvantage.

The following outlines whose needs may require consideration when completing a needs assessment:

- Individuals (including affected individuals who left the impacted area)
- Households
- Families (including affected families who left the impacted area)
- Transient or visitor groups
- Discrete groups within a community
- Communities
- Local government areas
- Representative bodies
- State and territory governments
- National governments
- International systems.

¹⁸ SRRG, *National Principles of Disaster Recovery*, p. 2

5. Considerations when undertaking a Recovery Needs Assessment (continued)

Disaster impacts, consequences and recovery needs reflect and often exacerbate existing social inequities, particularly for people who are disadvantaged in multiple ways.¹⁹ Needs assessments should be inclusive of all population groups, taking into account their specific requirements to support whole-of-community recovery. Relevant groups for consideration, identified in the **Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience Handbook** include but are not limited to:

- Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples)
- Culturally and linguistically diverse groups (CALD)
- People who are living with disability, chronic illness or mental health issues
- People of diverse genders and sexual orientations
- Those living in socially or physically isolated locations, or high-risk circumstances (including domestic and family violence)
- Those experiencing homelessness, unemployment or poverty
- The elderly (whether living in their own homes or in formalised care arrangements)
- Children and young people
- Those with limited access to information or resources.²⁰

It is important that gender, social, cultural, ecological and economic diversity within community groups is considered when conducting DRNAs.²¹ All these factors contribute to how a disaster impacts different groups within the community.

Participants in DRNAs should reflect the gender, social and cultural diversity of the population within the area for which the assessment is being conducted. A DRNA is of little value if it does not adequately represent the different groups impacted by a disaster.²²

5.4 Recovery domains and timespans

As the needs of those affected are multidimensional, DRNAs should have a wide focus in order to get a full picture of potential needs. Needs will differ based on the type of disaster and phase of the recovery timeline. Recovery needs within a few weeks of a disaster event will differ from those after several months or years. It should also not be assumed that recovery needs will linearly decrease (or increase) over time. This reinforces the requirement for ongoing, iterative DRNAs that span the entire recovery timeline. DRNAs should consider potential short, medium and longer-term needs across the recovery domains.

Issues such as a changing climate mean that Australian communities are increasingly at risk of exposure to successive and cascading disaster events (where one hazard event leads to systems failures and/or secondary hazard events). This may lead to impacts across all recovery domains. As disaster events become more frequent and severe, communities may face multiple disasters simultaneously or in quick succession, adding to the overall complexity of recovery management efforts and lived experience.

19 Recovery Capitals (ReCap) Project Team, (2021), *Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals (ReCap)*

20 AIDR, (2020), *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience Handbook* p. 2





21 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), (2009), *FRAME Toolkit: Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the environment in refugee-related operations*, p. 51

22 UNHCR, (2009), *FRAME Toolkit: Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the environment in refugee-related operations*, p. 51



When designing questions for a DRNA, some potential impacts, consequences and needs to consider are listed below. These suggestions are not meant to be exhaustive and are drawn from The Recovery Capitals²³:

Table 3: Example of potential impacts, consequences and needs across recovery domains

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT 	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can damaged social connections in community groups be mended?• What ways can risks to public health be reduced?• What services are available for those whose mental health has been impacted by the disaster?• Are there any groups that are more vulnerable to the impact of the disaster? What are their unique needs?• What assistance do education providers require to meet the needs of children, families and staff and to resume classes?• Are existing community services/facilities impacted? What support do they need to get up and running again?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the environment safe to remain in? (e.g. continued flooding; contaminated water ways)• How can ecosystems and protected areas be protected from further impact?• Is there any vulnerable flora and fauna that needs protection or temporary relocating?• Are native animals and plants being considered as part of the recovery planning?• Is there support for both companion animals and livestock? (e.g. boarding for domestic pets or food support for livestock)• Who will manage the environmental clean-up? (e.g. deceased livestock).
ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT 	BUILT ENVIRONMENT 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is support (financial or otherwise) available following job loss due to the consequences of the disasters?• What support can be provided to businesses to support reopening and economic recovery?• Do people need support after suffering material/property damage?• Is there need for assistance with insurance claims?• Is financial assistance required?• What are the indirect impacts/costs to individuals and communities impacted by the disaster?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What infrastructure (public and/or private) needs rebuilding or repairing?• Have utilities been impacted? What assistance is needed to get them up and running again?• Is emergency housing needed (for both short and long-term)?• Have hospitals been impacted? What assistance do hospitals need to meet the needs of their patients?• Are transport networks impacted?• Are government services affected/accessible? Can support be provided to ensure easy access to services?• What are redevelopment plans? Do they include building back better and ensuring communities are more resilient towards disasters?

23 ReCap Project Team, (2021), *Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals (ReCap)*

5. Considerations when undertaking a Recovery Needs Assessment (continued)

The Recovery Capitals is an additional resource, which has been developed as a guide for people, organisations and governments managing disaster recovery. The guide aims to support wellbeing after disasters by providing evidence-based guidance to aid decision making. It identifies seven areas of recovery – natural, social, financial, cultural, political, built and human – and emphasises the interconnectedness between them. It is targeted and practical, and can be applied to any type of emergency, large or small.²⁴

It is also important to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, other CALD people, disadvantaged community groups, LGBTIQ+, women and people with a disability, to understand their needs as they relate to all recovery domains.

5.5 The do's and don'ts

Each disaster is unique and so are the recovery needs of affected individuals and communities. While it is challenging to identify universal prescriptions of good practice, experience from many different recovery situations indicate that some actions are advisable, whereas others should typically be avoided when assessing recovery needs, as identified below.

Table 4: Recovery actions do's and don'ts²⁵

DO's	DON'Ts
✓ Where possible, establish one overall coordination group who will coordinate recovery needs assessments.	✗ Do not create separate groups that do not talk or coordinate with one another.
✓ Support a coordinated response, participating in coordination meetings and adding value by complementing the work of others.	✗ Do not work in isolation or without thinking how one's own work fits with that of others.
✓ Collect and analyse information to determine what the unique recovery needs are of affected individuals and communities.	✗ Do not conduct duplicate assessments or accept preliminary data in an uncritical manner.
✓ Tailor disaster recovery needs assessments to the local context.	✗ Do not use assessment tools not validated in the local, disaster-affected context.
✓ Recognise that people are impacted by disasters in different ways. More resilient people may function well, whereas others may be severely affected and may need specialised supports.	✗ Do not assume that everyone in a disaster is traumatised, or that people who appear resilient need no support.
✓ Facilitate the development of community-owned, managed and run programmes.	✗ Do not duplicate assessments or ask very distressing questions without providing follow-up support.
✓ Build local capacities, supporting self-help and strengthening the resources already present in affected groups.	✗ Do not organise supports that undermine or ignore local responsibilities and capacities.

²⁴ ReCap Project Team, (2021), *Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals (ReCap)*

²⁵ *IASC.(2007). Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial. Support in Emergency Settings*, p. 15



5.6 Stakeholder engagement

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach with active support and participation from all relevant stakeholders including national, state and local governments, impacted communities, NGOs and private sector partners.²⁶ A better understanding of the roles, responsibilities, accessible information and opportunities for collaboration across stakeholders can facilitate improved outcomes in the recovery process.²⁷ For example, prior to DRNAs being designed and conducted, engagement with stakeholders tasked with providing recovery services allows for input on key information gaps that should be addressed during the assessment (e.g. lack of knowledge about current services available or services that have been affected, financial assistance required, identifying vulnerable groups).²⁸ This will also help reduce unnecessary duplication of assessments and the possibly over/under provision of recovery programs.

When planning a DRNA, it is important to identify and engage with relevant stakeholders as this will assist in the timely sharing of relevant data once DRNAs have been conducted. Table 5 below provides a summary of key recovery stakeholders and their potential roles in recovery.²⁹

Table 5: Summary of key stakeholders and recovery roles

STAKEHOLDER	ROLE IN RECOVERY
Impacted community/communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will not be a homogenous group – communities are made up of different groups and voices• Will have skills, experience and local knowledge that could be used as a potential resource for future activities, planning and longer-term recovery arrangements should have the community at the centre and be aimed at facilitating the community’s ability to drive its own recovery processes and outcomes
Impacted individuals and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May live within the disaster-impacted area, or be geographically dispersed• Will have different experiences of the event and different recovery needs• Recovery may be compounded by pre-existing issues such as illness, disability, financial insecurity, substance abuse, etc.
Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recovery role will vary depending on legislation• Local government provides a broad range of services to communities within and outside of disaster recovery• Strong local knowledge and networks
State/territory government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will have a range of recovery responsibilities across the portfolios of government, e.g. health, education, infrastructure, economic development, etc.• Structure may include regional-level arrangements as well as state-level• A key coordinating role in disaster recovery

26 *AIDR Community Recovery Handbook*, p. 66

27 *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, July 2020 edition

28 *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings*, p. 158

29 *AIDR Community Recovery Handbook*, p. 38

5. Considerations when undertaking a Recovery Needs Assessment (continued)

Table 5: Summary of key stakeholders and recovery roles (continued)

STAKEHOLDER	ROLE IN RECOVERY
Commonwealth government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides leadership and collaborates with other levels of government in disaster research, policy making and support for disaster relief and community recovery • Provides resources through the DRFA when state and territory resources are insufficient
Non-government organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key role in recovery through the provision of personal support, management of appeal funds, coordination of donated goods and volunteer efforts
Local community and social service organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integral to community recovery and likely to be ‘first on scene’ in terms of establishing initial recovery activities • Trusted, local providers of services such as community health, education, housing, drug/alcohol/family violence programs, youth and family services, etc. • Local knowledge, skills and experience • Remain in the community over a longer term • May be directly impacted, which can affect service provision, at least temporarily
Local community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integral to community recovery and likely to be ‘first on scene’ in terms of establishing initial recovery activities • Will have local knowledge, skills and experience that could be used as a potential resource for future activities, planning and longer term recovery • Able to connect with and mobilise community capacity • May have pre-existing, community-designed plans for recovery • Members may be directly impacted, which can affect the group’s functioning, at least temporarily
Emergent groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be from within or outside of the impacted community • Generally emergent groups form to provide assistance with one or more aspects of recovery • May include groups who expand their ordinary operations to include recovery activities, e.g. service clubs such as Rotary or Lions • Can be a vital source of ‘surge capacity’ to help manage relief and recovery
Emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have legislated responsibilities for response and transition to relief and recover • Likely to be locally based within (and include members from) the impacted community • Likely to continue to assist with recovery efforts, where possible, in a formal or informal capacity
Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical stakeholders in economic recovery • May also comprise impacted individuals and families • May be particularly vulnerable to the effects of recovery activities, e.g. restricted access to the community and impact of donated goods on economic supply
Utilities and statutory authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical stakeholders in the repair and reconnection of services such as water, power and telecommunications • May have a role in determining how reconstruction and recovery occurs in terms of land use and availability/connection to infrastructure services and utilities

6. Data collection

6.1 Types of data

Data can be grouped into the categories of primary data and secondary data. Within these categories, data can be qualitative or quantitative.

Primary data are information gathered directly from the data source. Primary data are useful as they are collected with the purpose of addressing a particular problem. Primary data may include observations or interviews with those affected/working in the affected areas.³⁰ Other types of engagement activities to collect primary data include focus group discussions, surveys and outreach activities. This list is not exhaustive and there are a number of guidance materials in the resources list at Section 8 that suggest engagement methods and associated activities. Recommended engagement methods can be found via the International Association for Public Participation. The person completing the assessment is encouraged to select a method of engagement which is reflective of the audience and the material needing to be collected.

Secondary data are taken from sources that have already been created (usually for another purpose) and reused for a particular purpose. Secondary data in the context of a recovery needs include written reports, pre-existing documents, maps, images, journal articles, and newspaper reports. For example, when conducting a Community Profile Assessment, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is a valuable source for verified data on community demographics using data by region or census Community Profiles products as a starting point.

Qualitative data are:

- Non-numerical and express subjective and interpretive qualities, characteristics, and patterns of an item or process.
- Collected through methods like interviews, focus groups, observations, or diary accounts, and analysed using methods like grounded theory or thematic analysis.

Quantitative data are:

- Measures of values or counts and are expressed as numbers.
- Data about numeric variables (e.g. how many, how much or how often).

Quantitative and qualitative data provide different outcomes, and are often used together to get a full picture of a population. For example, if data are collected on annual income (quantitative), occupation data (qualitative) could also be gathered to get more detail on the average annual income for each type of occupation. Further examples can be found on the ABS website.

To assist in collecting data, it is recommended that existing local/district human and social recovery plans are reviewed to further understand the community context when conducting a recovery needs assessment.

³⁰ JCU, Pre rapid *Community Impact Assessment*, p. 33

6.2 Considerations for data collection

The below outlines some key considerations when collecting data to support disaster recovery needs assessments:

- Pre-prepared and agreed upon questions are used for the collection
- Consideration of timeframes (from and until when should questions assess a situation)
- When the data will be available
- Consideration of partnerships in the collection process
- Consideration of the typical information sources
- Accessibility to information sources
- Common/standard formats for recording information
- Data are gathered from a diverse range of sources to ensure the coverage of distinct geographical areas, culturally and linguistically diverse groups and gender differences. Special attention is given to assessing the situation of the most vulnerable populations (which are often the most difficult to assess)
- Sources are recorded but care is taken not to expose respondents to risk of data breach in insecure areas
- Both qualitative and quantitative data are sought and used
- Sample design and the selection of key respondents to capture the capacities, resilience and resources of different groups within the affected community:
 - » e.g. a local group in the area may have well established networks such as food kitchens, there may be a strong youth mental health program in the district or a local community group may have set up a donated goods hub which has been running since week one.
 - » A good data source is Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (**SEIFA**) developed by the ABS. This resource ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.
- Where feasible, those collecting data should be trained and competent to do so in a recovery setting
- Ensure respondents' privacy and security are safeguarded:
 - » Personal information (e.g. names) is only recorded with consent, and such information is not shared outside of the team unless necessary.
 - » If data are to be shared and there are no security or protection measures in place, it is important to ensure data are de-identified or identifiable information is not collected in the first place.
 - » Establish a policy on collecting and referring sensitive information. It should define the circumstances under which information may be referred and respect the principle of informed consent.



6.3 Considerations for data analysis

Analysis is an important component of the assessment process to ensure needs requirements are addressed. The key questions to be asked are:



In addition to the considerations outlined in 6.2, the following questions should be addressed:

- Has the data been triangulated?
 - » Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of a disaster event³¹ and tests the validity of data through cross verification from more than two sources.
- Does the data conflict?
- Have any assumptions been made? If so, what are they and how do they impact the data?
- Does the data analysis cover capacities and resources, including the resilience of different population groups, as well as 'needs' related to the current situation?
- How is the current situation anticipated to evolve?
- Has secondary data been systematically reviewed and evaluated in relation to:
 - » The data collection techniques used including the adequacy and reliability of sampling?
 - » Whether the reported findings appear to represent the true situation (and, if not, the likely direction of the bias – over-estimation or under-estimation)?
- Has data on the current situation been compared with both national standards and local pre-crisis seasonal norms?
- Have changes identified been compared with the pre-crisis situation/baseline in relation to demographics, health status, and health care systems?
- Has analysis been initiated in real time concurrent with data collection and initial findings discussed in open dialogue with all involved parties including the impacted communities? Have the findings been regularly reported back to the affected communities to enable verification, ownership and participation in the recovery process?

³¹ Carter *et al.*, (2014), *The use of triangulation in qualitative research*

6.4 Using the data

Once data are collected and analysed, there should be a better understanding of the needs of the affected individuals and communities. Data from the DRNAs should highlight:

- Where needs exceed local capacity and/or capability,
- Which needs require addressing.

Approaches for meeting identified needs should not be solely developed by a planning team. Other stakeholders need to be included in the Recovery Project Cycle including community-based organisations, emergent volunteers or community representatives (such as local government representatives) and most importantly, the affected individuals and community members. It is essential that the latter two groups are an integral part of, and participate in, all stages of the recovery cycle.

The collection, analysis and use of data is a dynamic situation and an important part of the Recovery Project Cycle. Following the

assessment of needs, recovery projects are planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated; the data collected at each stage of the Recovery Project Cycles informs the next.

The following table is an example of how the data gathered can be collated and presented as part of the Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment.

6.5 Sharing data

Once data are collected, analysed and collated it is important that the data are shared with relevant stakeholders. DRNA data will help to inform the development of effective recovery plans and programs, and provide a foundation for recovery program evaluations. The list of relevant stakeholders in Section 5.5 will assist in identifying who the relevant data should be shared with and reduce the number of agencies conducting overlapping assessments.

Table 6: Example Recovery Needs Assessment Data

CATEGORY	IMPACT	METRICS	CURRENT ASSESSMENT	CONSEQUENCES	NEED	NEED ANALYSIS	RELEVANT RECOVERY DOMAINS
Education	School buildings damaged	Useable buildings remaining	5% of students can attend school	No in-class attendance, delays with learning outcomes	Alternative education options	This need requires an external solution as local school cannot provide an alternative option	Social Built Economic

7. Glossary of terms

Arrangements	A high-level, scalable overview of how states and territories address the risks and impacts of hazards through a collaborative approach to the prevention of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from emergencies (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Built environment	“Those human-made assets that underpin the functioning of a community” (AIDR, 2018, p. 92).
Capability	Capability is the collective ability and power to deliver and sustain an effect within a specific context and timeframe (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Capacity	Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on individual, community and organisational capacity and resilience (AIDR, 2018, p. 11).
Community	A social group with a commonality of association and generally defined by location, shared experience or function, and with a number of things in common, such as culture, heritage, language, ethnicity, pastimes, occupation or workplace (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Consequence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The outcome of an event or situation expressed qualitatively or quantitatively, being a loss, injury, disadvantage or gain. 2. The outcome of an event or situation expressed qualitatively or quantitatively. In the emergency risk management context, consequences are generally described as the effects on persons, society, the environment and the economy (AIDR, n.d.).
Continual Needs Assessment (CNA)	Occurs when recovery plans or programs have been implemented and is mostly achieved through monitoring and evaluation processes.
Costs	Of activities, both direct and indirect, involving any negative impact, including money, time, labour, disruption, goodwill, political and intangible losses (AIDR, n.d.).
Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA)	Comprehensive information gathering process that examines in detail the needs arising as the result of a disaster to identify the needs requiring longer-term interventions, and provide the data on which recovery programs for impacted community groups are designed.
Disaster	A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts. The effect of the disaster can be immediate and localised, but is often widespread and could last for a long period of time. The effect may test or exceed the capacity of a community or society to cope using its own resources, and therefore may require assistance from external sources, which could include neighbouring jurisdictions, or those at the national or international levels. (UNDRR, n.d.).
Disaster Consequence Assessment (DCA)	DCAs are conducted in the recovery phase and consider the long-term consequences of a disaster events across the four recovery domains.

7. Glossary of terms (continued)

Disaster Impact Assessment (DIA)	Carried out in response and recovery phases, DIAs assess impacts that are the direct result of a disaster event (after RIAs) and promote understanding of the impacts and consequences over time.
Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment (DRNA)	DRNAs are an ongoing, dynamic process that inform the identification of specific impacts, needs, available services and gaps in disaster affected communities through the collection of impact, consequence and recovery needs data and disaster information. DRNAs provide recovery practitioners and decision makers with a timely understanding of these needs to inform and adapt recovery programs and strategy.
Economic environment	The system whereby the affected community's material and service needs are met through appropriate labour and employment, business development, land use, financial resources, and interaction with the broader economy (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Hazard	A process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation. Hazards may be natural, anthropogenic or socio-natural in origin. (UNDRR, n.d.).
Impact	A sudden occurrence without prior warning. Can be Tangible or Intangible.
Jurisdiction	The state or territory in which an agency, organisation or statutory position has authority or responsibility (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Natural environment	Encompasses the natural and cultural resources of the community (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Needs	Requirements that mitigate the ever-evolving, unique impacts of a disaster event, on both an immediate and long-term timescale, informing the prioritisation of recovery efforts. Requirements for an individual's emotional, spiritual, cultural, psychological, social as well as basic needs (including health) (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Non-government organisations (NGOs)	Voluntary group of individuals or organisations that provides services and/or advocates a public policy (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Outcomes	Changes in the knowledge, behaviour, skills, status, and level of functioning, of a group or set of individuals; or changes to an institution such as its context and organisational capacity (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Rapid Impact Assessment (RIA)	RIAs are conducted immediately after an event to assess the impact of a disaster on affected people, property, environment and community infrastructure.



Recovery	The restoring or improving of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities, of a disaster affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better”, to avoid or reduce future disaster risk. (UNDRR, n.d.).
Recovery domains	The range of community impacts of disasters can be described across the social, economic, natural, and built environments. The four domains are separated for the purpose of functional responsibilities within recovery, however, in terms of how communities operate the four domains are intrinsically linked. (AIDR, 2018, p. 54).
Recovery interventions	<p>Effective recovery interventions require conducting a needs assessment across all affected sectors of society and using this information to create a recovery strategy.</p> <p>Effective recovery interventions help affected communities address early recovery challenges at the same time as they tackle longer-term issues in sustainable and innovative ways.</p> <p>Interventions that focus on measures such as capacity development, coordination and information management can make recovery much more effective (UNDP, 2016).</p>
Recovery needs	Requirements that address the ever-evolving, unique consequences of a disaster, on both an immediate and long-term timescale, informing the prioritisation of recovery efforts. Includes requirements to support an individual’s emotional, spiritual, cultural, psychological, social wellbeing, as well as basic needs (including health and shelter).
Recovery plan/strategy	A document that provides details of actions to manage disaster risk reduction and recovery from events (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Recovery program	A set of activities that deploys resources to achieve desired recovery objectives and outcomes. The word ‘program’ is sometimes used interchangeably with other terms such as ‘project’ or ‘effort’; in this Framework, we will use the word program whenever we discuss a set of coordinated activities that have disaster recovery as their key objective (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Recovery stages	The several phases of recovery, which will likely overlap and interact (NEMA [Au], 2022).
Social environment	The “relationships connected by networks of communication ... [it] consists of individuals, families and common interest groups that form whole communities” (AIDR, 2018, p. 79).

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