



Australian Government

National Emergency
Management Agency

Submission to the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding

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Q1. What experience have you had with Commonwealth disaster funding support?

We have received grant funding to successfully deliver social capital building projects across varied Australian communities including business communities. We have also submitted projects that were not funded.

Q2. How could Commonwealth funding support communities to reduce their disaster risk?

Australian communities include people. People who should be the foundation of resilience and risk reduction. To build a culture of resilient people who understand their risks, mitigate and reduce them we need to invest in them. Invest in their knowledge and actions.

Recent figures show 97% of funding is on infrastructure.

If true, that leaves 3% put towards people. Yet it's people who build resilience and reduce risks. There needs to be a better balance with extensively more investment in people.

This would require an investment in building knowledge, capabilities, social capital and social infrastructure across all Australian communities. Connecting people through conversations and knowledge building will build capabilities and capacity resulting in positive behaviour changes.

In short, we need to build a new cultural people movement who are risk aware and make decisions based on reducing their risks. And NEMA must deliver to their business being about communities.

In this approach, business people needs to be included in the strategic approach and decision making. People in communities who own and run businesses are assets to the Australian government from social and economic perspectives. There should be greater consideration and funding towards actively building a culture of risk awareness, reduction and disaster readiness in all businesses across Australia.

If a majority-led focus on investment in infrastructure alone continues it will not deliver to the Australian Government's focus of getting "disaster ready".

If no focus is put towards the value business communities offer and the need to build resilience in the people running the businesses, then our communities will disappear with people needing to leave to find work and other social issues such as increases in suicides, domestic violence and unemployment will rise.

It's time to invest in people.





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Q3. Please describe your understanding of Commonwealth disaster funding processes.

The Australian Government has powers to support States with funding. They have no power to lead the response for any disaster but can offer financial support. While the funding is typically issued where a State/Territory needs to match the contribution, this is not always the case.

However, when providing funding in programs such as grants the final choice sits with the Commonwealth who can instantly override the States.

Q4. Are the funding roles of the Commonwealth, states and territories, and local government, during disaster events clear?

We understand them given our tenure of working in the emergency management sector. I would say to others they would not be clear.

Q5. Is there any further information you would like to provide?

We would like to share the below and ask the following questions for consideration by the review team:

1. How does the government measure social capital and social infrastructure grant submissions?

The balance of investment between people and infrastructure must change from the current 97% towards the latter. With this must come transparent and evidence-based investment methodology to support strategic investments in social capital and social infrastructure investments (ie initiatives that support people to build knowledge and capabilities, and strengthen the places in which they connect).

Our recommendation is a national measurement framework is established with Professor Daniel Aldrich to put a quantitative value on the un-used contribution that social capital and social infrastructure brings to Australian communities. And this measurement be shared and used when assessing grant programs.

2. Why do grant programs discriminate against social enterprises to seek Federal funding?

In NSW we are not eligible to apply as a social enterprise, yet we are in all other States. This is discriminatory and should result in a Federal stance on eligible organisations including social enterprises.

Our recommendation is there must be national consistency re who can source grant funding across organisation types. We suggest a formal agreement is established with Social Traders.

3. Why is matched-funding mandatory for not-for-profits and social enterprise organisations?

As an organisation who's whole focus is to build resilience in people we are instantly unable to apply for funding which requires matched 1:1. There must be consideration added for organisations who deliver extensive benefits to the community but do not have the financial capacity to meet funding requests. We refer to South Australia's approach in their Risk Reduction grants which has a tiered matched format.

Our recommendation is there needs to be consideration for organisations who cannot meet the 1:1 matched funding criteria.

4. Why is matched funding mandatory for applicants and yet an airport in QLD was funded with no matched funding in the round #1 DRF program?

There does not seem to be any transparent consistency in decisions.





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Our recommendation is for more transparency over matched funding.

5. Why are state priorities overruled and where is the transparency of the successful grant decisions?

Projects have been accepted by States and yet were not by Federal decision makers. There is no opportunity for feedback and no transparency around how decisions were made.

Our recommendation is for transparency in grant programs on how the assessment process will be implemented at the forefront to enable organisations to decide if they have a chance before spending time pulling together a submission. In addition, assessment feedback should be mandatory to give an understanding as to why a submission was not funded.

