



Australian Government

National Emergency
Management Agency

Submission to the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding

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Submitted by: Elisabeth Shaw - Relationships Australia (NSW)

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

No response provided.

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

The Commonwealth could better support communities to reduce their disaster risk by funding programs that build individual and collective resilience and improve capacity to recover and move forward after a disaster.

This should include increased funding for non-government organisations to deliver prevention / preparation programs that build resilience within at-risk communities, as well as post-disaster support services that support both communities and the required workforce through the recovery phase.

Acknowledging the significant burden of post-disaster trauma and associated impacts on the individual, families, the recovery workforce and the broader community, it is vital that people are provided with the right support.

The 2022 NSW Floods Inquiry identified a disconnect between top level management of community disasters and on-the-ground community responses.

A loss of connectedness to each other, a loss of livelihoods, loss of life, and certainly the loss of usual ways of life. The impacts of this are that people feel disoriented, powerless, distressed, isolated, and less able to deal with stress in their usual ways.

Safety is also compromised – research shows that domestic and family violence and elder abuse escalate in these scenarios, and mental health issues can be exacerbated, right when access to support networks is most difficult. These pressures have pushed many to crisis point. Relationships Australia NSW (RANSW) sees this firsthand with many of our clients and it creates significant additional demand for our services.

We've also identified a gap in training for people working in disaster recovery, resilience support workers and mental health workers.

Specifically, understanding the cycle of what a community goes through following disaster, what it means to apply a trauma informed lens to recovery work, and the importance of working with local communities to come up with their own solutions.





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RANSW supports disaster-affected communities to recover and move forward.

However, funding programs that address climate-related trauma tend to be scattered and short lived, largely at the discretion of local Public Health Networks and LGAs.

RANSW sees emerging issues across generations that if not addressed will leave an ongoing and expensive legacy for governments at all levels.

The Federal Government needs to prioritise delivering trauma informed services to help communities prepare for, and recover from, disasters.

Capacity and resilience-building has an immediate effect and will also help with whatever lies ahead by way of floods, bushfires or any other disasters. This early intervention work is important in preparing for long-term solutions and resilience.

In our experience, to effectively build resilience in the community the Commonwealth needs to target three key cohorts:

1. First responders and the service system.
2. Community resilience leadership.
3. Grass roots community-led resilience, recovery and connectedness projects.

Importantly, these resilience and recovery initiatives should be founded on co-design principles and build on the strengths and assets present in each community.

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

No response provided.

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

No response provided.

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

Relationships Australia NSW's work on the ground in disaster affected areas has un-earthed unmet community needs.

RANSW would appreciate any opportunity to provide further information to the Commonwealth, or to discuss how we can support preparedness and recovery efforts in effective, local, sustainable ways.

Relationships Australia NSW provides clinical, social and emotional support services not only for community leaders, families and individuals, but also for:

- * First responders: SES, RFS, NSW Reconstruction Authority, Defence workers
- * Recovery workers, council employees
- * Other professionals and private sector workers supporting recovery response with traumatised communities.





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First line responders can experience high levels of trauma, often dealing with individuals or groups that are extremely distressed, and this can lead to burnout.

We are currently delivering projects across NSW to support communities impacted by fires, floods and other climate-induced disasters. More than 300 people have received resilience leadership training (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, farmers, young people, older Australians and first responders), providing workshops to more than 2,500 community members.



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121 Marcus Clarke Street, (PO Box 133) Canberra ACT 2601
Level 10, 10 Felix Street, (PO Box 15084) Brisbane QLD 4000