

Queensland Neighbourhood Centres

Strategy for Bushfire Resilience

2021 - 2023





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- Glass House Mountains Neighbourhood Centre
- Granite Belt Neighbourhood Centre
- Gympie Community Place
- Hambleton House Community Centre (Cairns)
- Livingstone Shire Council Community
- Maleny Neighbourhood Centre
- Mooloolah Community Centre
- Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre
- Nambour Community Centre
- Northshore Community Centre
- Pomona Community House
- The Neighbourhood Hub (Mackay)
- Sarina Neighbourhood Centre
- Whitsunday Neighbourhood Centre
- Winton Neighbourhood Centre
- Moranbah and District Support Services

Shared experiences and knowledge among these organisations raised collective understanding of the role Neighbourhood Centres play in supporting bushfire-affected communities and the challenges that arise in this context.

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Foreword

Queensland is the most natural disaster affected state in Australia. Whilst Queenslanders have always responded to cyclones, floods, bushfires and drought, it is clear the frequency of these events is occurring at a more rapid rate over the past 20 years. Local communities have needed to acknowledge that responding to natural disasters needs to be a part of their yearly planning in order to build economic, social and individual resilience.


Whilst it is reported that many major non-profit organisations respond to natural disasters in Queensland, the response of local Neighbourhood and Community Centres is often overlooked. These Neighbourhood Centres have been operating in local areas for more than 40 years, conducting community development with their communities and orchestrating citizen-led solutions for the challenges that they face. Their local knowledge and relationships mean they are well suited to prepare for, and respond to, disaster affected communities whether it be an acute event like a cyclone or flood, or a chronic event such as a drought or pandemic. As they are already located in disaster affected communities, they are often the first to respond with Emergency Relief for Queenslanders who have lost everything.

The Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) evolved from Neighbourhood Centre community development networks in the early 1980's. As the key leadership body for around 140 Neighbourhood Centres across the state, the

QFCA has recognised the incredible value of these Centres in responding to community issues. Over many years, the QFCA has been aware of the incredible role Neighbourhood Centres are playing in preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters with very few financial resources. Whilst these disasters may vary in form, the process and methodology Neighbourhood Centres use demonstrates consistent effectiveness in local communities.

From 2019, the QFCA began to more effectively capture, communicate and enhance the work of Neighbourhood and Community Centres in regard to natural disasters. Taking a developmental approach with the Neighbourhood Centres themselves, the QFCA embarked on the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience Project in 2020 to capture their local knowledge of responding to bushfires, researching the methods used and seeking innovative ways to enhance the work of Neighbourhood Centres in a coordinated manner.

While bushfire disasters are more prominent in Australia's southern states, Queensland experienced more than 90 bushfires over the summer of 2019-2020. It is believed that the low levels of rainfall in the lead up to the season, coupled with extreme temperatures in September were contributing factors (Bureau of Meteorology & Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, 2018). A total of forty-two Local Government Areas (LGAs) declared a state of emergency (Australian



Institute of Disaster Resilience, 2020), with fourteen LGAs being directly impacted - 49 homes, 100 dwellings and 340 km of the road network were destroyed or damaged (Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia Annual Conference (Nov 2020)). In addition to the impacts of heat and smoke exposure, affected individuals and communities have reported to experience a range of mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and domestic violence following the disaster (Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences, 2020).

Neighbourhood Centres have responded by supporting individuals and communities affected by bushfires and are committed to helping them rebuild their resilience. They are incredibly resourceful when supply chains are cut to external services and embed in long-term recovery efforts in the years following. The Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience is guided by local community needs and priorities. The Strategy has been developed *with* local Neighbourhood Centres rather than for them. It is built on Neighbourhood Centres' knowledge of local communities and captures their process and work when responding to bushfire-affected communities.

A key feature of Neighbourhood Centre work is the partnerships they form on a local and wider community level. This strategy creates opportunities to strengthen support for Centres from local, state and federal Governments as well as other non-profit organisations and key stakeholders working in bushfire affected areas. The implementation of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Bushfire Resilience Strategy will require resourcing the sector to enhance the capacity of these Centres to respond to bushfire affected communities. The value inherent in local place-based Neighbourhood Centres and their grassroots work needs to be adequately recognised as a vital contribution to the human services sector and local communities.

Tomas Passeggi
President
QFCA

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Foreword | 3 |
| 1. Introduction | |
| 1.1 Overview | 8 |
| 1.2 Bushfires in Queensland | 9 |
| 1.3 About Neighbourhood Centres | 13 |
| <i>1.3.1 Core characteristics</i> | |
| <i>1.3.2 Fostering resilience</i> | |
| <i>1.3.3 Embedded in communities</i> | |
| <i>1.3.4 Local governance</i> | |
| <i>1.3.5 Local resourcing</i> | |
| <i>1.3.6 Key findings from the QFCA Neighbourhood Centre Survey 2020</i> | |
| 2. Methodology | |
| 2.1 Research Framework | 17 |
| 2.2. Research Questions | 17 |
| 2.3 Development of the Strategy | 18 |
| 3. Strategy for Bushfire Resilience | |
| 3.1 Relevance and Implementation of the Strategy | 22 |
| 3.2 Strategy A: Raising awareness about Neighbourhood Centres' capacity | 24 |
| <i>3.2.1 Insights from the Survey</i> | 24 |
| <i>3.2.2 Case study</i> | 27 |
| <i>3.2.3 Neighbourhood Centres' connection with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community</i> | 28 |
| 3.3 Strategy B: Collaborating with Local Disaster Management Group | 29 |
| <i>3.3.1 Neighbourhood Centres can add value to the LDMG</i> | 29 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 3.4 Strategy C: Managing and supporting volunteers | 31 |
| 3.4.1 <i>How do Neighbourhood Centres engage with spontaneous volunteers in a disaster</i> | 31 |
| 3.4.2 <i>How spontaneous volunteers value-add to Neighbourhood Centres' capacity to support disaster-affected communities</i> | 32 |
| 3.4.3 <i>Principles and guidelines for spontaneous volunteer management</i> | 32 |
| 3.4.4 <i>Neighbourhood Centres' experience with managing spontaneous volunteers</i> | 34 |
| 3.4.5 <i>Case study</i> | 35 |
| 3.5 Strategy D: Business continuity planning | 37 |
| 3.5.1 <i>What does a disaster-specific business continuity plan need to include</i> | 38 |
| 3.6 Strategy E: Sharing resources | 39 |
| 3.6.1 <i>Bushfire's Resilience Forum and Resource Library</i> | 39 |
| 3.6.2 <i>Neighbourhood Centres Disaster Resource Directory</i> | 41 |
| Summary | 43 |
| Appendix A – Survey for Neighbourhood Centres | 44 |
| Appendix B – Survey for Local Stakeholders | 50 |
| References | 53 |



1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) secured the majority of funding through the CQ Bushfire Category C Flexible Funding Grants Program to promote social cohesion and community integration in response to bushfires through the work of Neighbourhood Centres. The Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience focuses on bushfire-affected communities between Central Queensland and the Sunshine Coast region. The structure and language of the Strategy have been designed to reflect the three-fold purpose of the Strategy:

- (i) it is a tool, which supports Neighbourhood Centres to further their capacity to support their local communities through bushfires.
- (ii) it is a research document, which advocates for Neighbourhood Centres' work in the bushfire resilience space, and
- (iii) it is a pathway, to identify key ways in which the QFCA can support the Neighbourhood Centre network throughout the state.

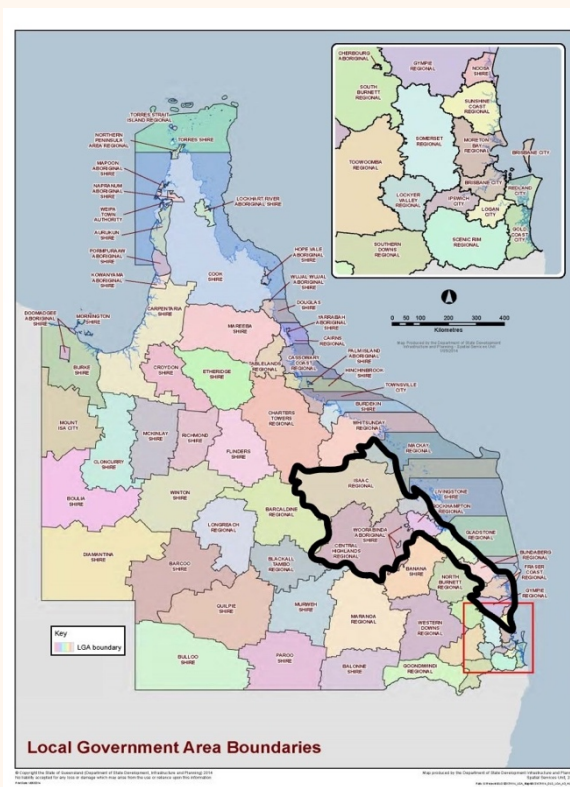


Figure 1. Map of Neighbourhood Centre involved in the development of the Strategy.

The Strategy is aimed to complement disaster management plans and can be used to facilitate conversations with local organisations, the Local- and District Disaster Management Groups, Local, State and Federal Governments and any other relevant stakeholders in disaster resilience strengthening and community disaster planning.

A note on naming: Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland operate under various names, including Community Centres and Community Hubs. In some areas, Local Governments employ Community Development Officers or equivalent positions to deliver the same or similar function of a Neighbourhood Centre. For the purpose of this Strategy, the term 'Neighbourhood Centre' refers to organisations with similar core objectives.

1.2 Bushfires in Queensland

With the decrease in rainfalls and increase in extreme temperatures and heatwaves compounded by climate change, the Australian environment has become more prone to severe weather conditions in recent decades, including bushfires. Over the summer of 2019-2020, where temperatures and dryness reached a record high, catastrophic bushfires burned across the country, including New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia (Yu, Xu, Abramson, Li and Guo, 2020). More than 90 bushfires occurred in Queensland, covering 7.7 million hectares of land. Fourteen Local Government Areas were directly impacted by the fires, including Bundaberg, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Gympie, Ipswich, Livingstone, Lockyer Valley, Noosa, Redland, Scenic Rim, Somerset, Southern Downs, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba (Queensland Reconstruction Authority, 2020). It is reported that 49 homes, 100 dwellings and 340 km of the road network were either destroyed or damaged. Significant areas of the rainforest were also impacted, including the destruction of Binna Burra Lodge at the Scenic Rim Region of Lamington National Park (Scott, 2020).



Like any disaster, experiencing a bushfire is traumatic and impacts the wellbeing and resilience of affected individuals and communities. It has been estimated that the 2019-2020 bushfires impacted 18.3 million adults across Australia, with 11.2 million people reporting to be affected by smoke (Biddle, Edwards, Herz & Makkai, 2020). In addition to the health risk of smoke exposure, the experience of evacuation, loss of loved ones, home, belongings, pets and livestock, disruption to daily life and ongoing uncertainty can be devastating and destabilising (Beyond Blue, n.d.). The marathon of rebuilding homes and

lives is often accompanied by exhaustion and memories of the event.

The impacts of these bushfires are even more pronounced in vulnerable populations (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disabilities Services, 2016). Although there is much discussion about integrating Indigenous land care practices into disaster resilience planning, research rarely centres on its specific impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's well-being (Spurway, 2018). Additionally, homeless populations are uniquely vulnerable to natural disasters. Yet, the loss of shelter types that people experiencing homelessness may use are rarely considered in disaster planning or recovery. It locks people experiencing homelessness out of many of the resources provided to assist with recovery (Osborn, Every & Richardson, 2019).



Moreover, people with physical disabilities are at a significantly increased risk of dying during natural disasters (Quail, Barker, & West, 2019). Older populations also report that the existing disaster preparedness approaches in their communities often failed to consider their physical, cognitive, and financial limitations during severe weather events (Astill & Miller, 2018). Language barriers, social isolation, and limited experience in disasters can also increase refugee and migrant populations' vulnerability to these events (Teo, Goonetilleke, Deilami, Ahankoob & Lawie, 2019). A common theme across these vulnerable groups is that members of these groups are often left out of discussions on disaster resilience, leaving their needs unrecognised and unmet. In addition, there are many reported barriers to accessing support after a disaster. These are illustrated in Figure 2, adapted from Gov X Digital Transformation Agency's research in partnership with Queensland, Victoria and South Australian governments examining the needs and 'pain points' of disaster-affected individuals.

Figure 2. Barriers to accessing disaster-related support (adapted from Gov X Digital Transformation Agency).

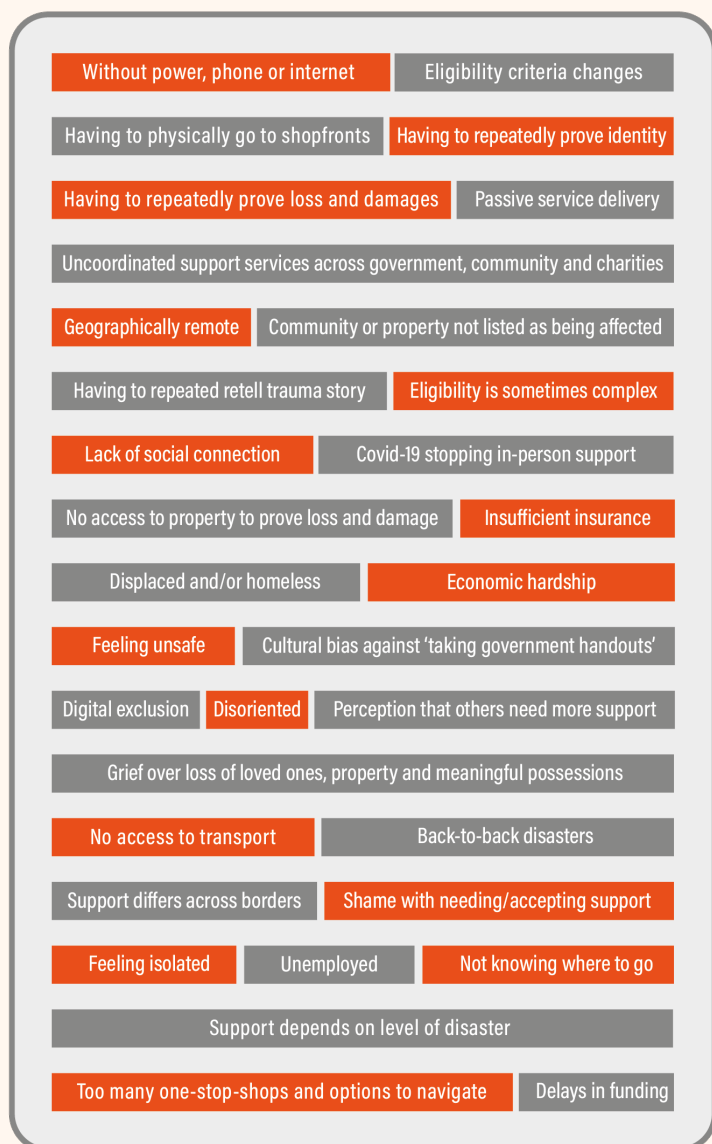


Figure 3. Barriers to accessing disaster-related support addressed by Neighbourhood Centres.



As a “place people can come and debrief” and access information, support and referral, Neighbourhood Centres are uniquely placed to respond to the needs of the community affected by disasters. Their person-centred approach also helps to lessen some of the barriers that support-seeking individuals face after a disaster; as shown in Figure 3.



As part of their core work, Neighbourhood Centres are already engaged with vulnerable members of their community, helping to build upon their existing strengths to increase their resilience and capacity. The challenge is to support Neighbourhood Centres in leveraging these skills and connections to improve how the community responds to bushfires. Strategies are required to increase disaster preparedness and hazard reduction and build disaster resilience across the community. Disaster resilience includes:

- addressing acute risk
- increasing community engagement
- growing local leadership
- strengthening social supports
- building connections across organisations
- reducing resource inequities, and
- providing opportunities for all members of the community to have a voice in identifying and addressing their unique needs to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2008).

Disaster resilience prepares communities to not only survive natural disasters like bushfires but also to adapt and 'bounce forward' from them (Martin & Sunley, 2015).

Neighbourhood Centres are uniquely positioned to respond to disasters using effective and inclusive citizen-led community development approaches. Studies have found that disaster preparedness efforts are most successful when it is face-to-face, community-specific and relational (Ryan, Johnston, Taylor, & McAndrew, 2020). Already engaged in helping to leverage the strengths of vulnerable community groups, Neighbourhood Centres are well-placed to support local communities to recover from bushfires and enhance their resilience to prepare for and respond to future events.



While this work is well-established, there is limited research documenting the specific ways Neighbourhood Centres work builds community resilience to the impact of bushfires. The Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience aims to address this gap by capturing the strengths and capacity of Neighbourhood Centres in Central Queensland and Sunshine Coast region. Using participatory action research, the Strategy tells the

stories of resilience-building initiatives and opportunities from a Neighbourhood Centres' perspective. It builds an evidence base for locally-led, strength-based strategies that all Neighbourhood Centres can leverage to increase their communities' disaster resilience.

1.3 About Neighbourhood Centres

Neighbourhood Centres have been operating in many western countries since their beginnings as Settlement Houses in the 1880s. The movement of Settlement Houses spread to the United States in the 1890s, playing a pivotal role in establishing the modern social work movement. Neighbourhood Centres (or Neighbourhood Houses) began flourishing in Australia during the early 1970s under the Whitlam Government's Australian Assistance Plan alongside community development initiatives.

As community-owned and operated organisations, Neighbourhood Centres spread throughout Queensland in the 1980s. Today there are an estimated 138 Neighbourhood Centres in the state. The Queensland Government currently funds 126 Neighbourhood Centres that provide friendly, localised access to child, family, and community services. Core funding provides capacity for Neighbourhood Centres to operate and enable access to additional funding from other government and non-government sources for identified opportunities and needs.

Neighbourhood Centres are at the heart of local communities, and they are as diverse as the communities they are part of. While the size, governance, and funding models of Neighbourhood Centres can vary greatly, some core characteristics underpin everything they do.

1.3.1 Core Characteristics of Neighbourhood and Community Centres:

- ✓ each has their own identity, unique to the communities in which they are located.
- ✓ are accessible to all members of the community and embrace diversity and inclusion.
- ✓ participate in regional planning and development, forming partnerships for collective impact that improve community outcomes and engage the wider community in solutions.
- ✓ assist connection to community services and supports.
- ✓ support individuals to realise their potential and participate in community life.
- ✓ deliver, auspice and incubate community projects that address local challenges and opportunities.
- ✓ work with their communities to identify, design and resource local gaps and emerging needs.
- ✓ enable citizen-led change to build community capacity, resilience and social capital.
- ✓ partner with other stakeholders for a collective impact approach to achieving social priorities.
- ✓ enable the vision of the Queensland Government by increasing the social and economic participation of people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities and strengthening the social and economic wellbeing of communities to help them thrive.

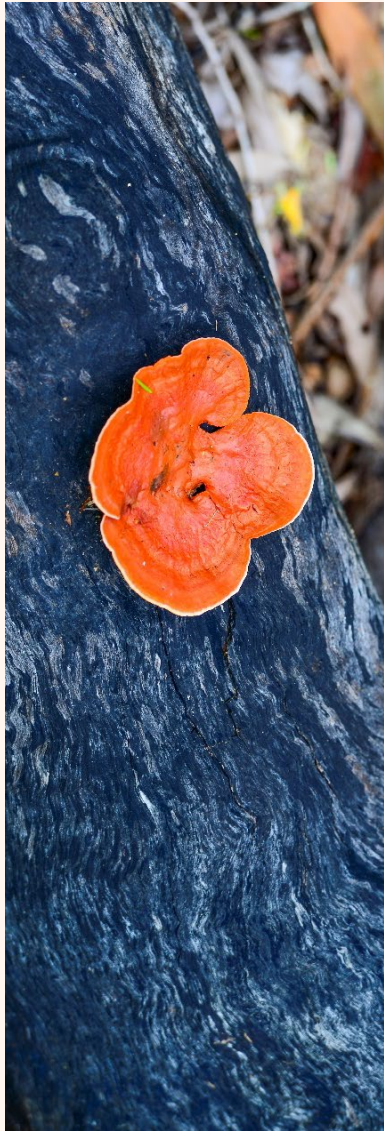


1.3.2 Fostering Resilience

A unique characteristic of Neighbourhood Centres is their whole-of-life approach: no matter what stage of life or situation a community member is facing, Neighbourhood Centres are there for their communities. They work with their communities to address loneliness, isolation, and ill-health. Together they build a sense of safety, purpose and belonging. Their early intervention and prevention strategies reduce the need for more intensive, high-cost services.

Neighbourhood Centres are often the first port of call for people experiencing hardship. They offer information, support, and emergency relief, along with capacity building activities to grow independence and resilience. People may arrive in crisis and, through support and opportunity, emerge as a volunteer or key contributor to their community.

Neighbourhood Centres are also a critical resource in responding to localised emergency events, due to their uniquely flexible model. Their ability to rapidly mobilise and adapt supports to meet immediate needs often places them as the human service sector's 'first responder' following social, economic, or environmental change in communities such as natural disaster and economic downturn.



1.3.3 Embedded in Communities

Neighbourhood Centres use innovative approaches to reaching and engaging people and offer a 'soft-entry', open-door, accessible gateway to support. Neighbourhood Centres build and maintain relationships and community connections.

They may facilitate reconciliation activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and programs that promote the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

While Neighbourhood Centres are usually based in a physical building, the work can happen in a wide range of different spaces and locations across communities. This may include active outreach activities, events, and meetings.

1.3.4 Local Governance

Reflecting their community-led focus, most Neighbourhood Centres maintain a community owned and managed model, with volunteer committees made up of local representatives. Volunteer Management Committee (Board) members provide professional guidance in governance, risk management and compliance.

Funded Neighbourhood Centres comply with the Human Services Quality Standards. These are based on the following principles:

- ✓ *Respecting human rights* - services are planned and delivered in a manner that respects and has regard for the individual's human rights, in keeping with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- ✓ *Social Inclusion* - services are planned and delivered to promote opportunities for people to be included in their communities.
- ✓ *Participation* - people using services are included in decision-making about the service they receive.
- ✓ *Choice* – within available resources, people using services have the opportunity to make choices about the services, and where and how they receive them.



1.3.5 Local Resourcing

In-kind community contributions are a significant part of Neighbourhood Centres' success, with often extensive volunteer hours subsidising the running costs of Centres and program delivery. Neighbourhood Centre staff and volunteers are thus highly resourceful. They are often skilled networkers and collaborators who are able to leverage local assets, skills and support for rapid response to local needs or overcome resource constraints.

Neighbourhood Centres often rely on a diverse mix of funding initiatives. This may include: recurrent and non-recurrent funding from different levels of government; grants; philanthropic funds; corporate sponsorship; and membership fees. Many Centres also generate revenue through avenues such as room hire and social enterprises.

1.3.6 Key findings from the QFCA Neighbourhood Centre Survey 2020

In 2020, the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) developed a survey to capture the social value and contribution of Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland; it is the first of its kind to be used on the Neighbourhood Centre network in Queensland. While the importance of local governance, community resources, and fostering community resilience cannot be numbered or costed, the survey results communicate very important information about Neighbourhood Centres' work. Key highlights of the survey results are presented below. The full copy of this report can be found on the QFCA website.

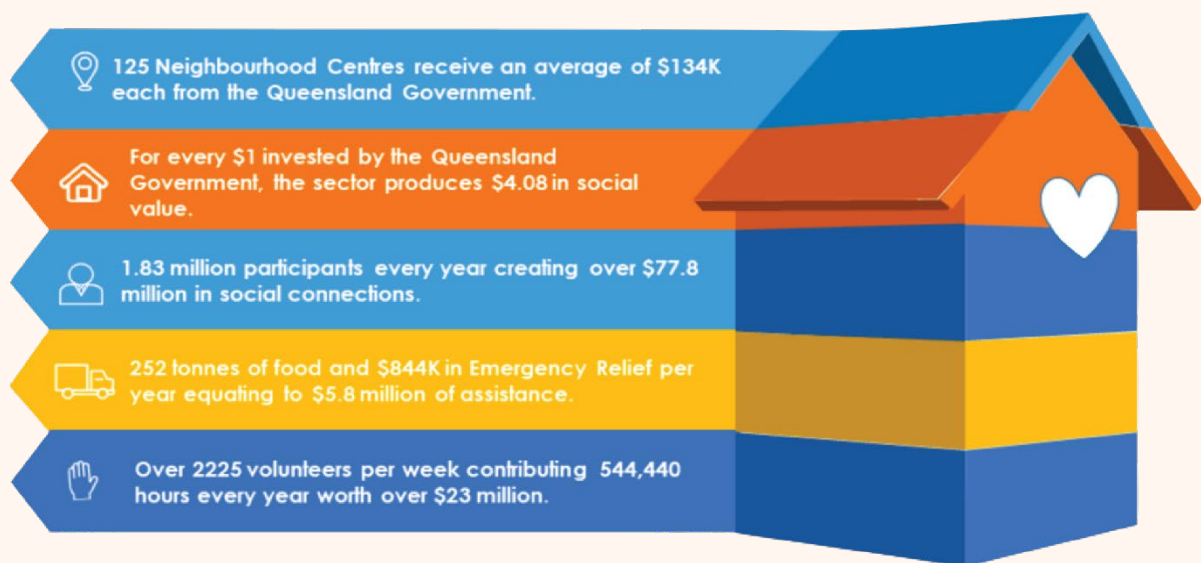


Figure 4. Key findings from the QFCA Neighbourhood Centre Survey 2020.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Framework


The methodology used for developing the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience was Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR emphasises collaboration with the participants throughout the process of inquiry and values the participants as co-researchers. Reflecting community development principles, PAR recognises community stakeholders as knowledge holders and supports citizen-led initiatives and actions. The participants in this research are Neighbourhood Centre representatives from in and between Central Queensland and the Sunshine Coast region who have been invited to participate in the development of the Strategy. They were engaged in all stages of developing strategies that they perceived to be essential to furthering their capacity in supporting bushfire-affected communities. Relevant stakeholders, including non-profit organisations and local government, were also engaged in the research to gain broader perspectives on Neighbourhood Centres' role in bushfires.



2.2 Research Questions

The research questions that guided the development of the Strategy were:

1. What is the role and value of Neighbourhood Centres in the context of bushfires?
2. What are the experiences of Neighbourhood Centres in supporting bushfire-affected communities?
3. What strategies would Neighbourhood Centres like to put in place to enhance their capacity in supporting bushfire-affected communities?



2.3 Development of the Strategy

The development of the Strategy was grounded in participatory action research principles, placing the Neighbourhood Centre representative, the participants, at the core of appreciative inquiry and decision-making. The research began with a scoping review to identify literature and government publications on Neighbourhood Centres' role in supporting disaster-affected communities. The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, *Queensland Bushfire Plan*, *Queensland Bushfires State Recovery Plan 2019-2022*, and *Queensland State Disaster Management Plan* were prominent resources in this process.

Following the scoping review, twenty-five Neighbourhood Centres from in and between the Central Queensland and Sunshine Coast region were invited to develop the Strategy. Using scoping telephone conversations, online consultations, and survey (see Appendix A), Neighbourhood Centres were asked to share knowledge and understanding of their role in supporting bushfire-affected communities. Most of the Neighbourhood Centres engaged with the development process where they could. Some had limited capacity to participate due to prior commitments. Although most Neighbourhood Centres involved in developing the Strategy had not experienced supporting their communities through bushfires specifically, many have in the context of monsoons, flooding, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Neighbourhood Centres drew on their learnings from managing these disasters to identify strategies that would nurture their capacity to strengthen their community's resilience to all disasters, namely bushfires.

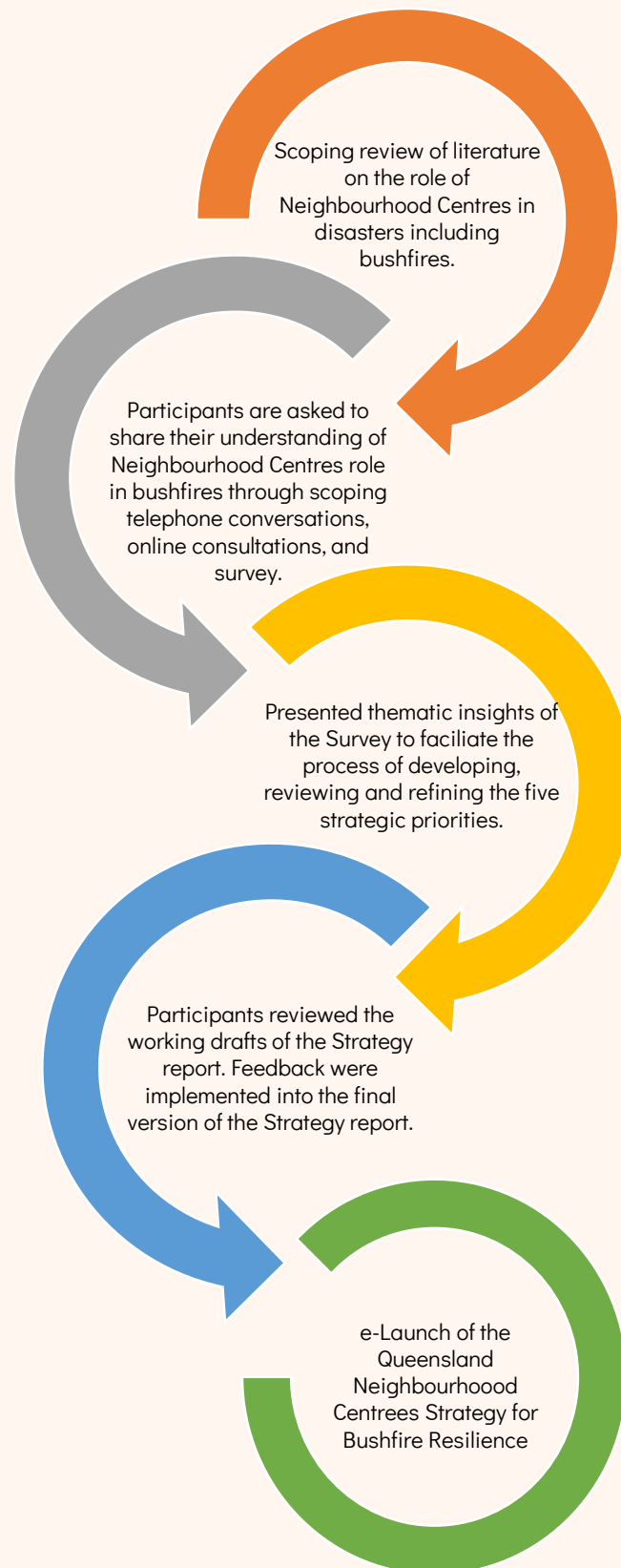
Next, thematic insights that emerged from the survey were presented to participants as part of an online workshop that formed the first brainstorming session of strategies that could enhance Neighbourhood Centres' capacity to support bushfire-affected communities. A summary of the thematic insights was emailed to participants who were unable to attend the online workshop.

Regular online consultations facilitated the process of developing, reviewing and refining strategies that reflect the varied needs and priorities of the participating Neighbourhood Centres in their role in supporting bushfire-affected communities. Participants also guided the language of the identified strategies and the supporting evidence-based discussion. Subsequently, the participants reviewed working drafts of the Strategy; their feedback and suggestions were implemented into the final version.

The e-Launch of the Strategy was presented in collaboration with Neighbourhood Centre representatives who shared their reflections and insights on the identified strategies.



Figure 5. The process of developing the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience.





3. Strategy for Bushfire Resilience

The following five strategies aims to enhance Neighbourhood Centres' capacity in supporting bushfire-affected communities.



Figure 6. Bushfire resilience strategies.

3.1 Relevance and Implementation of the Strategy

Neighbourhood Centres across Queensland have developed five strategic priorities to support and amplify their capacity in supporting bushfire-affected communities. These strategic priorities reflect the different needs and opportunities Neighbourhood Centres have identified in their organisation and local communities. As every Neighbourhood Centre's makeup and capacity is unique, each would implement these strategies according to their priorities while recognising that support from the community and government is also needed.

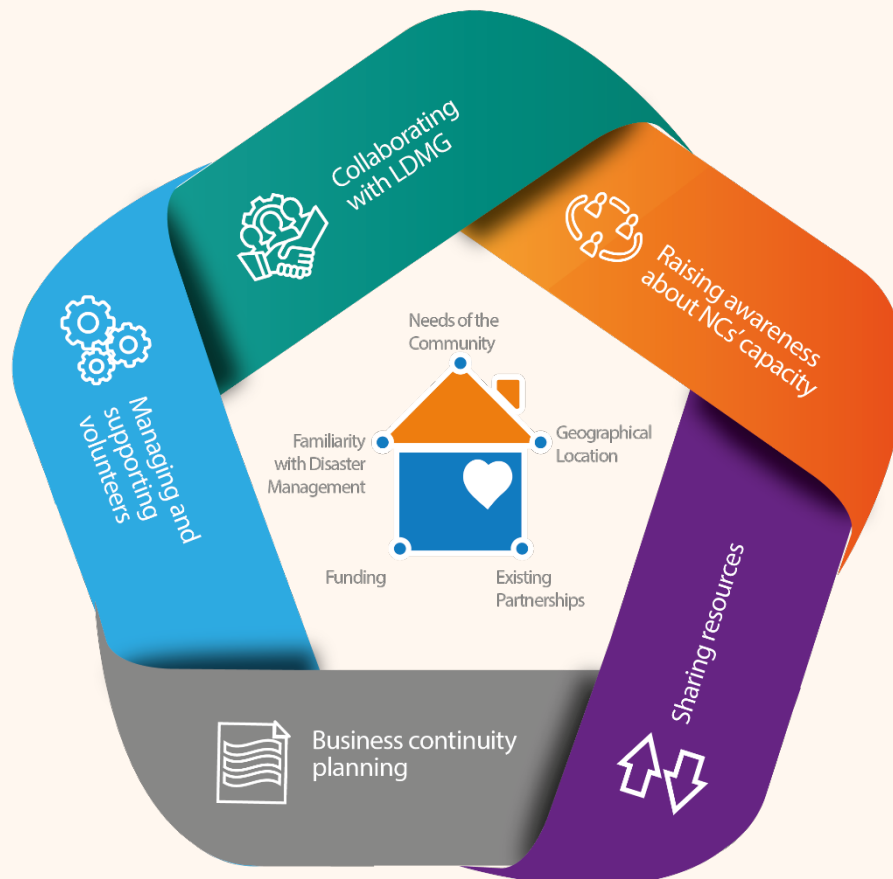


Figure 7. Factors impacting the development and implementation of the Strategy.

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

- **Needs of the community and geographical location**

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



- **Funding**

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

- **Familiarity with disaster events and management**

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

- **Existing partnerships with Local Disaster Management Group and local organisations**

A Neighbourhood Centre's longevity can play a role in the strength of existing local partnerships with Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) and local organisations; however, it is not the only determinant. Some Neighbourhood Centres may have been operating for several decades yet only have limited local partnerships, which can be for several reasons. Other Neighbourhood Centres may only be in their 'teenage years' but have already built strong partnerships. Sometimes the occurrence of a natural disaster can also 'jumpstart' the collaborative relationships in disaster management.

All these factors influence the needs and opportunities identified by a Neighbourhood Centre in the development of bushfire resilience strategies and how they will be implemented.

Strategy A: Raise awareness among disaster management representatives, the capacity of Neighbourhood Centres to respond to the needs of bushfire-affected communities.



Neighbourhood Centres are at the heart of local communities, supporting and orchestrating citizen-led solutions for the challenges they face in day-to-day life, including crises like bushfires. As they are typically not first responders to disasters, their work in this space is often overlooked. Neighbourhood Centres have supported their communities through disasters using their local knowledge and relationships, particularly in the preparation and long-term recovery process.

While most Neighbourhood Centres, the participants, involved in developing the Strategy had not experienced supporting their communities through bushfires specifically, many have in the context of monsoons, flooding, and the COVID-19 pandemic. They draw on their learnings from managing these disasters to identify strategies that will nurture their capacity to strengthen their community's resilience to all disasters, including bushfires.

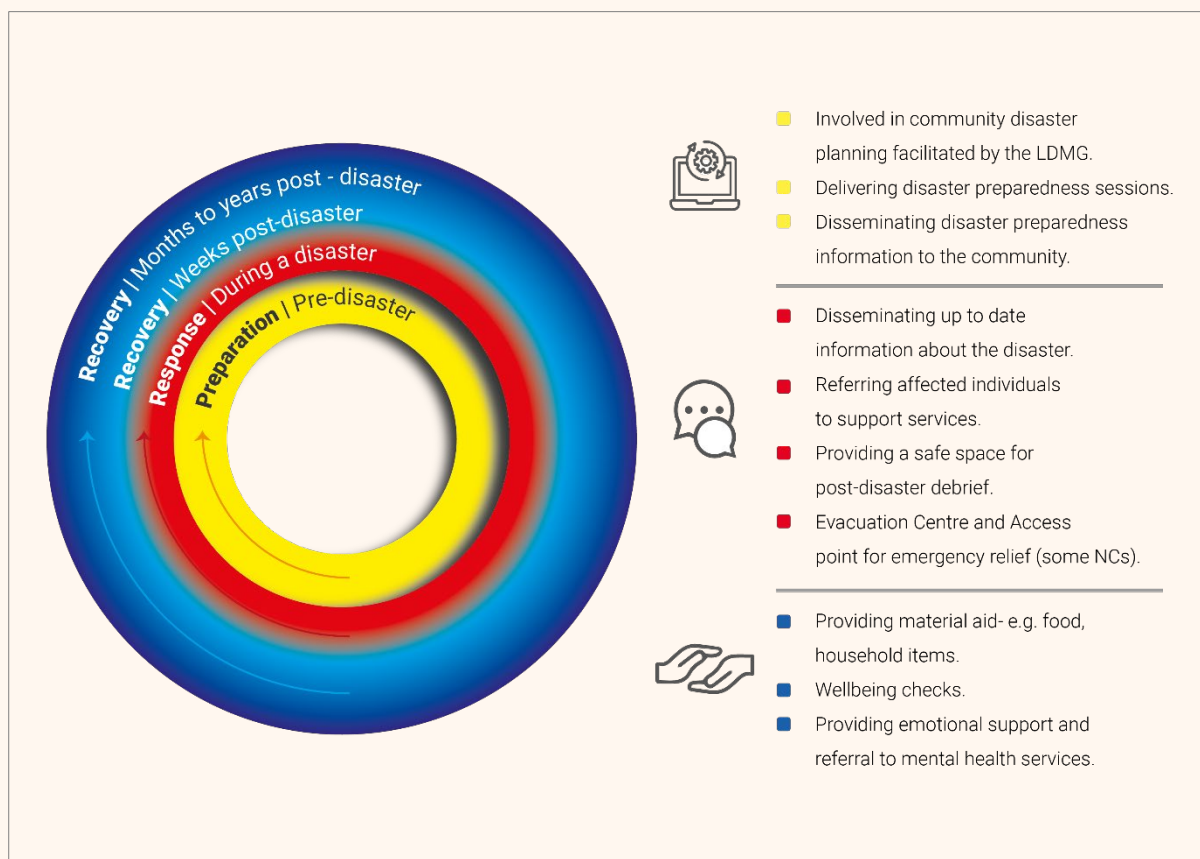
3.2.1 Insights from the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience Survey for Neighbourhood Centres

The *'Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience – Survey for Neighbourhood Centres (the Survey)'* was developed as an inquiry tool to understand how the participants have supported their local communities in bushfires. Nine Neighbourhood Centres completed the Survey. While the response rate, 36%, was relatively low, it offered some insight into:

- the capacity of Neighbourhood Centres to support communities in preparing for, responding to and recovering from bushfires; and what supports were prioritised;
- the level of connection Neighbourhood Centres have with their local communities, including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups;
- how Neighbourhood Centres communicate with residents; and
- how Neighbourhood Centres collaborate with local stakeholders in disaster management.

An analysis of the survey responses was shared with the participants through a PowerPoint presentation delivered over Zoom videoconferencing and emailed to all the participants. It provided an opportunity for the participants to hear about other Neighbourhood Centres' experience with supporting local communities in times of bushfires as well as other disasters. These are summarised below.

Figure 9. The roles that Neighbourhood Centres can play at each phase of disaster management



While the services and supports offered at each Neighbourhood Centre varied depending on its resources and the needs of the local community, their capacity at each phase of disaster management was similar, and are summarised below:

- **Neighbourhood Centres are well-placed to support their community to plan and prepare for bushfires.**

*“Neighbourhood Centres have the capacity to drop everything and help the community” ...
“We can change and adapt at the drop of a hat” – Participant*

- **The key role that Neighbourhood Centres can play in the response phase is to provide information and referral for affected individuals.** Some Neighbourhood Centres have the resources to open up as an Evacuation Centre or Access Point for Emergency Relief when required. They are not equipped with the resources to support their communities in responding to bushfires at the capacity demonstrated by first responders, such as Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

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

- **Neighbourhood Centres have the greatest capacity in the recovery phase and are invested in helping communities recover from bushfires.**

“Neighbourhood Centres continue to be there for the community after the big organisations leave; and are there to support people to rebuild their lives post disaster.”
 – Participant

As participants reflected on their experience with supporting communities throughout disasters such as cyclones and flooding, many highlighted that the recovery phase is where they have the greatest capacity to support their community. Neighbourhood Centres explained that first responders such as State Emergency Services, Australian Red Cross and Salvation Army provide invaluable support when a disaster occurs and in the first two weeks after. However, these ‘big organisations’ leave once the response phase is over. Neighbourhood Centres are often the only consistent place where residents can turn to for ongoing support throughout their recovery, months and years after the event. According to the World Health Organisation (see Figure 10 below), most people will still be recovering from the psychosocial impacts of a disaster 12 months after the event, and reconstruction typically takes up to 3 years. Psychosocial impacts refer to “how a disaster affects people’s emotional, spiritual, financial, cultural, psychosocial and social needs as part of a community” (Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, 2018).

| Psychosocial problem | Before emergency – 12-month prevalence | After emergency – 12-month prevalence |
|---|--|--|
| Severe mental disorder (e.g. psychosis, severe depression, severe disabling anxiety disorder) | 2-3% | 3-4% |
| Mild or moderate mental disorder (e.g. mild and moderate depression or anxiety) | 10% | 20% (reduces to 15% with natural recovery) |
| Moderate or severe psychological/ social distress (no formal disorder but severe distress) | No estimate | Large percentage (reduces due to natural recovery) |
| Mild psychological/ social distress | No estimate | Small percentage (increases over time) |

Figure 10. Summary of World Health Organisations’ Predictions on the Prevalence of Psychosocial Problems after an Emergency. Source: Department of Human Services (2009) adapted from van Ommeren (2006).

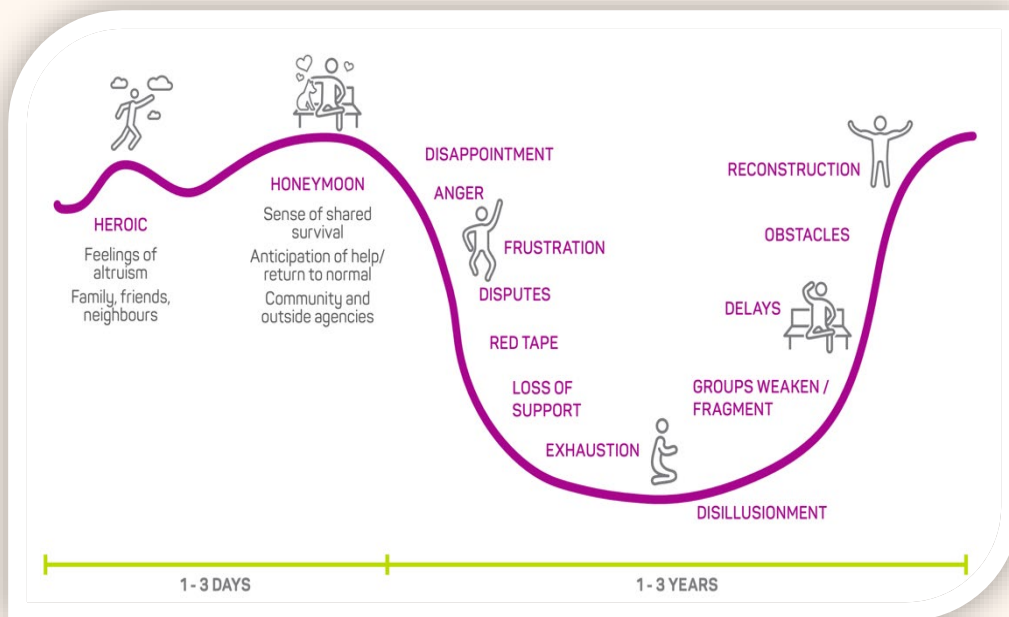


Figure 11. Difference Phases that Individuals and Communities Might Experience Post Disaster. Source: Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience adapted from Cohen and Ahearn (1980) and DeWolfe (2000).

3.2.2 CASE STUDY

“In the 2018 Woolooga fire, once the emergency response was completed and the [Local Disaster Management Group] Human Social Recovery Sub-group was able to respond, our Centre quickly provided local support information resources to the impacted residents. The Centre directly provided access to immediate financial support through the provision of emergency relief funding. We coordinated and worked closely with other services such as St Vincent de Paul and The Salvation Army to ensure affected persons could receive this financial aid quickly and easily. We also liaised and worked with GIVIT to provide further, specific supports. Within the Human Social Recovery Sub-group, the Centre played an active role in the broader group response, to provide ongoing support the community affected.”

– Neighbourhood Centre, Central Queensland

3.2.3 Neighbourhood Centres' connection with the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities

As discussed earlier, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups are more vulnerable to the impacts of disasters like bushfire due to factors including but not limited to the language barrier, social connection and experience with disasters prevalent in Australia. One of the challenges that several participants face is communicating disaster-related information to CALD groups in their community promptly in foreign languages. According to *the Survey*, only 25% of participants indicated having a strong connection with CALD groups in their community. Seventy-five percent of participants see a need to strengthen their connection with this group. The participants recognised that having more effective communication with the CALD groups will strengthen their role in building their community's disaster resilience.

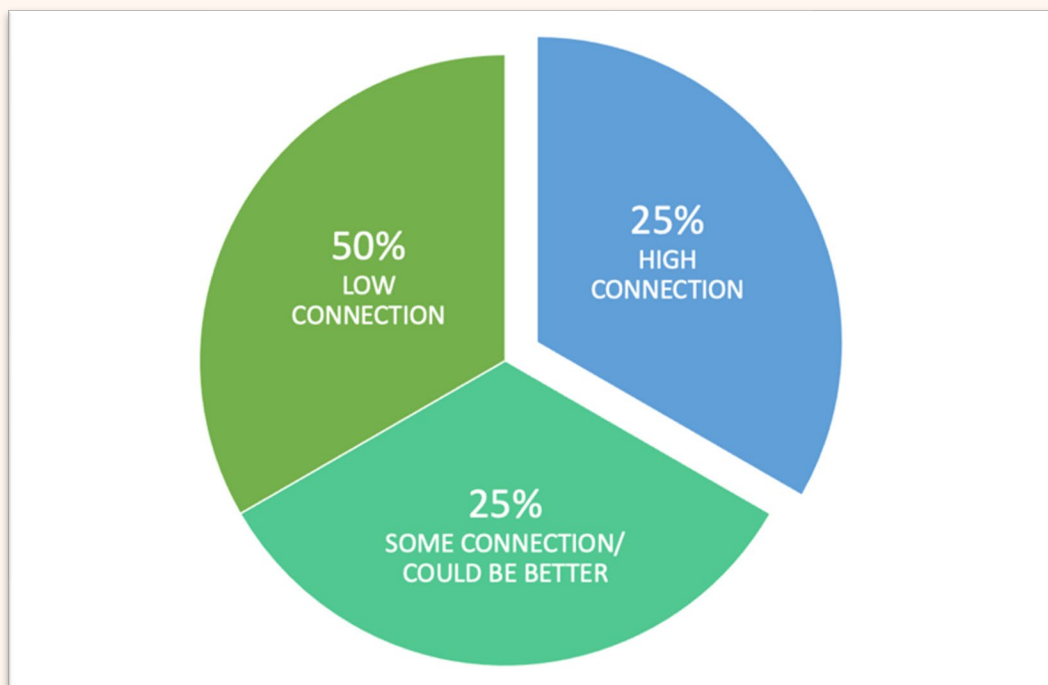


Figure 12. Representation of nine Neighbourhood Centres' indication of their sense of connection with the CALD community in the Survey.

Strategy B: Continue to build relationships with the Local Disaster Management Groups and explore collaborative ways to enhance local communities' resilience to bushfire.

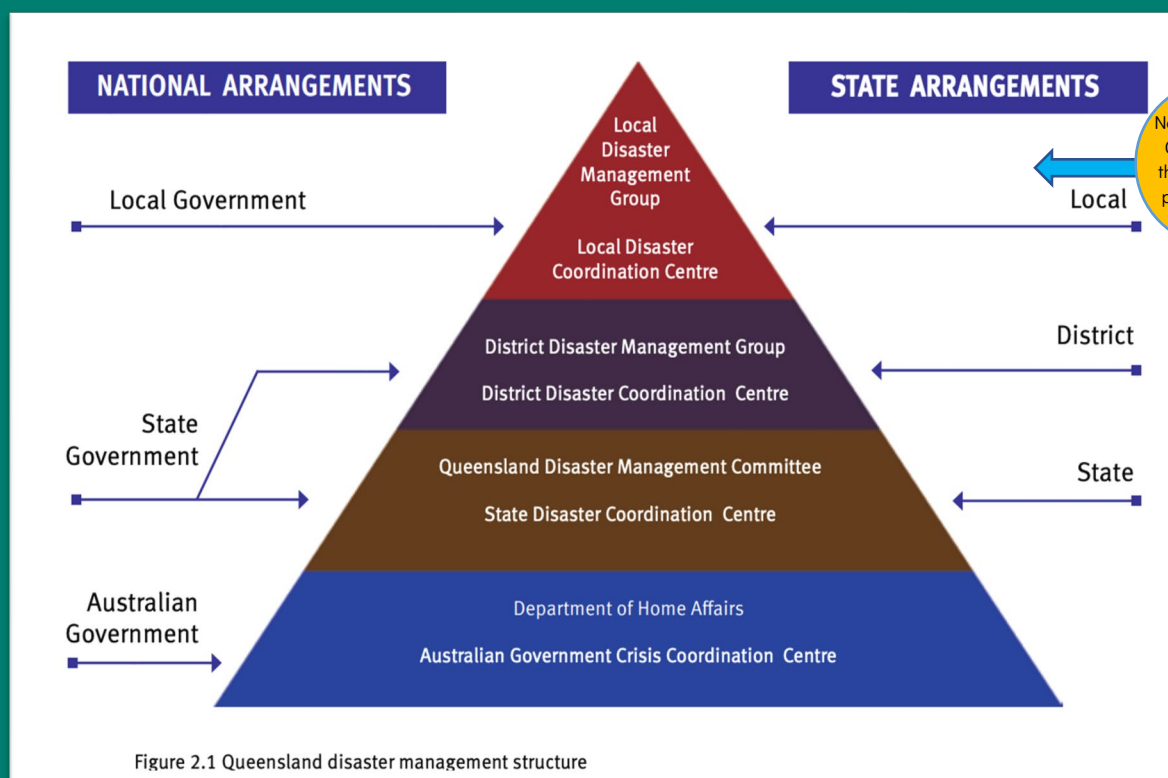


Figure 2.1 Queensland disaster management structure

Figure 13. The role that Neighbourhood Centre can play within the Queensland Disaster Management.

3.3.1 Neighbourhood Centres can add value to the Local Disaster Management Group

Within the context of the Queensland Disaster Management Structure, the role and responsibilities of Neighbourhood Centres in response to disasters, including bushfires, are generally outlined and guided by their Local Councils' Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG). However, each Neighbourhood Centre's function within this space is diverse and dependent on its resources and relationship with the LDMG. While most are independent not-for-profit organisations funded by the Department of Communities, Disabilities Services and Seniors, some Neighbourhood Centres are also funded by their Local Council. It is understood from our consultation that Neighbourhood Centres that operate within and therefore a part of the Local Council's organisational structure naturally have a better opportunity to be actively involved in the LDMG's disaster management planning. The LDMG are more likely to be aware of the capacity of these Neighbourhood Centres to provide support during a disaster, which can include:

- Setting up as an Evacuation Centre
- Setting up as a hub for first responders (e.g. State Emergency Services) to operate from
- Setting up as an access point for disaster-affected residents to access emergency relief.



The majority of the Neighbourhood Centres engaged in the development of the Strategy are independent not-for-profit organisations. The resources they have and their capacity to support disaster-affected individuals at each disaster phase are diverse and unique to their local community. Nevertheless, the common challenge they face is the limited opportunity to be a part of the disaster management planning process that the LDMG facilitates. Our consultation found that most participants felt that their capacity to support disaster-affected communities is overlooked and under-utilised. They argue that communities can be better supported to prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster when a whole-of-community disaster management planning occurs and all available resources are fully utilised. Since Neighbourhood Centres play a pivotal role in supporting disaster-affected communities and have relevant knowledge and experience, they need to be adequately recognised and included as a critical member of the LDMG's disaster management planning.

Neighbourhood Centres can adapt and respond to the needs of the community in times of disaster. It was highlighted during our consultation that communities often turn to Neighbourhood Centres for information and referral to support services when a disaster occurs. *“We are the ‘go to’, and people come to us. We connect with people at the personal level”*, a participant explained.

Neighbourhood Centres also learn from the conversations they have with disaster-affected individuals the effectiveness of disaster support services and identified gaps. They recognise the complexity of recovery and the stumbling blocks that people may face when rebuilding their lives. As an observer and knowledge holder of how communities experience disasters, Neighbourhood Centres can add value to conversations around disaster management planning and therefore need to be included in those conversations facilitated by the LDMG.

In particular, through the preparation and recovery phases of disasters, Neighbourhood Centres gain an in-depth understanding of the community's needs and connect with people in vulnerable situations. By being on the ground, Neighbourhood Centres build local knowledge about:

- the vulnerable people in the community and their needs;
- the mental health challenges that people face when recovering from a disaster;
- the kinds of support that help bushfire-affected families get through another day, weeks, months or even years after the event;
- the types of engagement activities that can open doors for connection to bring isolated individuals together; and much more.



Strategy C: Develop a process to manage and support volunteers.



There are more than 500,000 Australians who regularly volunteer their time to support communities (AIDR, 2017). Volunteers are "an important component of community resilience that includes local people and brings community capacity and resources to disaster response and recovery efforts" (AIDR, 2017) and many are often referred to as spontaneous volunteers. Spontaneous volunteers include individuals affiliated with an established volunteering organisation such as Volunteering Queensland, volunteers affiliated with a community organisation or sporting club, and local people who put their hand up to provide informal help to support their local communities in disasters, including bushfires (AIDR, 2017). Majority of the participants acknowledged, during our consultation, that with current resourcing, they would not be able to offer the additional staffing required in significant bushfire events.

3.4.1 How do Neighbourhood Centres engage with spontaneous volunteers in a disaster?

The majority of the Neighbourhood Centres utilise volunteers during disaster management and engage with them by:

- (i) Calling on existing volunteers affiliated with the Neighbourhood Centre who previously indicated that they are willing to step up and offer assistance in the event of a disaster.
- (ii) Requesting assistance from local volunteering-involving organisations and sporting groups, such as the Lions Club and Parents and Citizens Association.

One participant commented, "When we had a Bushfire near the end of last year, the Lions Club took on treating people at the local showground. We don't want to replicate that by bringing volunteers and asking them to do the same; so our next meeting at the LDMG Human and Social Recovery Sub-group is about figuring out who would be responsible for coordinating the volunteers involved".

- (iii) Local people who respond to a 'call out' message for volunteers during a disaster or simply show up at the Neighbourhood Centres expressing their willingness to help. Studies report that "60-90 percent of disaster survivors engage in some form of volunteering to help others following the disaster" (AIDR, 2017, p. 4).
- (iv) Engaging volunteers deployed by an established volunteering organisation like Volunteering Queensland and Australian Red Cross.



3.4.2 How spontaneous volunteers value-add to Neighbourhood Centres' capacity to support disaster-affected communities

Spontaneous volunteers are highly valued and play a vital supportive role across all phases of disasters. Volunteers who come from the local community, in particular, “can have valuable and locally relevant knowledge and experience, social networks, and skills” that enable them to connect more readily with residents impacted by the disaster (AIDR, 2017, p. 4). The participants reported during our consultation that one of the most important roles that volunteers play in disasters like bushfire is providing welfare checks and emotional support to affected individuals. One participant explained that in a past bushfire event, their volunteers focused on spending time with residents who walk into the Neighbourhood Centre over a cup of tea. They provide a safe space for residents, often traumatised by the event, to debrief and talk about what is going on for them. Several participants said that often what disaster-affected residents need the most is for someone to ask them, “are you okay?” and “what can we do to help?”. One participant shared that their most important learning from a bushfire is “to be available sooner” for their community.

3.4.3 Principles and guidelines for spontaneous volunteer management

In building a disaster-resilient community, the *Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience* recognises that it is essential to have a strong volunteer base that forms a part of “well-practised emergency response arrangements” (Queensland Transport Authority, 2017 p. 6). Volunteers also need to be effectively supported and managed in accordance with the following principles (AIDR, n.d.) to ensure that the work they do match the needs and priorities of the people affected by disasters.

- The people affected by an emergency are the first priority.
- Spontaneous volunteering is valuable and aids community recovery and resilience.
- Jurisdictions and agencies will take considered policy positions on whether they will engage spontaneous volunteers.
- Processes are needed to effectively engagement spontaneous volunteers and to avoid agencies being overwhelmed with offers of support.
- Standard volunteer management processes apply in times of emergency.
- Arrangements for managing spontaneous volunteers should be embedded within existing emergency management plans and operating guidelines.
- Everyone has the right to offer their assistance and to feel their offer has been valued.
- The time when spontaneous volunteers are needed may not coincide with the time when offers of help are being made.
- Effective, timely, consistent communication is essential in the management of spontaneous volunteers.

Figure 14. below summarises key considerations for Managing Spontaneous Volunteers Pre-, During- and Post- Disaster (Adapted from Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers Handbook (2018) and Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit (2010).

| Pre-disaster | During a disaster | Post-disaster |
|---|--|--|
| <p>> Identifying the gaps existing the organisation for disaster-related work.</p> <p>> Developing a job description for spontaneous volunteers outlining the potential roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>> Creating an organisational policy for managing spontaneous volunteer, outlining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When and how spontaneous volunteers will be utilised. • Who will coordinate and make decisions about spontaneous volunteers. • What training does the volunteer coordinator need?. • Strategies to mitigate identified risks. • Resources required to activate spontaneous volunteers. • Insurance. <p>> Developing a communication strategy to manage public expectations.</p> <p>> Creating a resource toolkit for the registration, screening, training and deployment of spontaneous volunteers. If planning to use volunteering organisations, set up a clear process of accessing spontaneous volunteers.</p> | <p>> Activating the spontaneous volunteer coordinator and the organisational policy.</p> <p>> Activating the communicating strategy.</p> <p>> Inducting the spontaneous volunteers about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context of the organisation. • The organisation’s role in the disaster • The current disaster situation. • The role of the volunteers – responsibilities, expected shift patterns, boundaries, where to access resources. • What they may encounter when working with disaster impacted individuals. • Communication line and requirements. • Self-care and available supports. • Duty of care, and • Occupational health and safety. <p>> Provide daily briefing, debriefing and support to spontaneous volunteers.</p> | <p>> Thanking the spontaneous volunteers.</p> <p>> Standing down and communicating to volunteers when they are no longer needed.</p> <p>> Providing an end-of-activation debrief with spontaneous volunteers, and discussing options for ongoing emotional support.</p> <p>> Reviewing the use of spontaneous volunteers and update the organisational policy if required.</p> |



3.4.4 Neighbourhood Centres’ experience with managing spontaneous volunteers

Reflecting on their engagement with spontaneous volunteers, most participants highlighted that further learnings and development in this area would be beneficial. Some of the challenges around spontaneous volunteer management discussed and Neighbourhood Centres plan to address these are summarised below.

| Challenge area | Neighbourhood Centre plan to address this by: |
|---|--|
| <p>(i) Recruiting suitable volunteers</p> <p><i>Neighbourhood Centres see the value of spontaneous volunteers and are interested in increasing the utilisation of suitable volunteers.</i></p> | <p>Enhancing the utilisation and coordination of volunteers via working with Local Disaster Management Groups, State Emergency Services, and local volunteering-involving organisations (E.g. Rotary Club, Lions Club, community service organisations), to develop a community register of volunteers and a consistent coordination system.</p> |
| <p>(ii) Inducting volunteers into the organisation</p> <p><i>As the priority is getting support out to disaster-affected people, inductions for volunteers are often ‘on the fly’ and ‘ad hoc’. Neighbourhood Centres see that an efficient induction process will be beneficial.</i></p> | <p>Research and learn from processes that other organisations effectively use to develop an approach suitable to the individual Neighbourhood Centre.</p> |
| <p>(iii) Assigning appropriate tasks to volunteers</p> <p><i>Neighbourhood Centres are sometimes unfamiliar with spontaneous volunteers’ skills and capacity, particularly volunteers accessed through established volunteering organisations, and therefore are uncertain about task assignment.</i></p> | |

(iv) Managing the risk of vicarious trauma and stress to volunteers, and providing ongoing support

Neighbourhood Centres would like to support spontaneous volunteers to receive adequate training around mental health and vicarious trauma.

- Upskilling Neighbourhood Centre staff with mental health first aid training to enhance their capacity to support volunteers. One participant commented, *“If we are a bit more trained up with mental health, then we are more able to help out volunteers through stress”*.

Additional resources:

Identified disaster-focused mental health training providers include Queensland Mental Health Recovery Program, St. Johns Ambulance Disaster Mental Health and Better Recovery training and Volunteering Queensland.

- Drawing on learning about incident management from other sectors to develop a tailored process for Neighbourhood Centres.

“In our mining areas, most have a mining incident management team...their strategies could be beneficial to Neighbourhood Centres with [managing] volunteers in disasters”.

(v) Duty of care including work health and safety, risk management, insurance and liability.

Undertaking necessary training in spontaneous volunteer management.

3.4.5 CASE STUDY

Our volunteer’s dedication is the main reason that Eden Community Access Centre (ECAC) continues to operate so successfully. They are a team of selfless people who are willing to give their time to help others on a regular basis. They have the ability to welcome anyone and everyone, and help with whatever issue they are experiencing at the time.

All volunteers are encouraged to attend training that may be of interest to them or benefit their volunteering role here at the Centre. Most of our volunteers have completed the “Accidental Counsellor” and “Mental Health First Aid” training.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of ECAC, and their contribution helps the Centres support the community socially and economically.

- Eden Community Access Centre

Additional resources:

- The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (Volunteering Australia 2015)
- National Spontaneous Volunteer Strategy: Coordination of Volunteer Effort in the Immediate Post Disaster Stage (Australian Government 2015)
- Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit (Australian Government 2010)
- Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection: Australian Emergency Management Arrangements
- Queensland's Emergency Volunteer Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW) program
- Victoria's Manager of Spontaneous Emergency Volunteers (MSEV) program



Strategy D: Develop a business template for Neighbourhood Centres.



The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (Queensland Transport Authority, 2017) emphasises that every individual, business, local and state government has a role in building disaster-resilient communities. As part of effectively managing and recovering from the impacts of disasters like bushfires and restore essential operations, businesses are advised to have a robust business continuity plan (Queensland Transport Authority, 2017, p. 5). Having a business continuity plan prepare businesses to identify the risks they may be exposed to during disasters and set up an appropriate contingency arrangement to continue delivering their services.

As an organisation that communities turn to for information, support and referral during disasters, strategic planning around how they will continue to operate should they be impacted by extreme weather is a priority of Neighbourhood Centres. The majority of the participants see the benefit of further developing their disaster-specific business continuity plan with the support of QFCA, a peak body that is experienced in and committed to strengthening the capacity of Neighbourhood Centres in fostering disaster resilience. The continuity planning questions about adapting and bouncing forward from a bushfire that the participants discussed during our consultation are summarised below.

- What would happen if the entire building is destroyed after a fire and takes six months to rebuild? How will we continue to operate?
- How will we access essential Neighbourhood Centre data and information if the building is destroyed in a fire?
- Who do we call for help if the building or staff is affected by the fire?
- What do we do if our Neighbourhood Centre is suddenly inundated with bushfire-affected people seeking help and support?
- Do we have the capacity to change normal operations to meet the community's needs during a bushfire?
- What if it is unsafe for our staff to come to the Neighbourhood Centre during a bushfire? How will we be continuing to offer services to the community?

3.5.1 What does a disaster-specific business continuity plan need to include?

Business continuity plans require a risk management approach, and in the disaster context, it will also need to consider disaster recovery procedures, including evacuation, first aid and health and safety (Queensland Health Disaster Emergency Incident Plan, 2019, p. 16, 19). Each plan needs to be tailored to the structure, operation, disaster management experience and resources of each Neighbourhood Centre, taking into consideration of:

- The organisational structure, the chain of command for emergency and disaster response, and communication channels
- Essential business functions and services and the resources required to operate them
- Analysis of all the potential risks, their impact on business functions, likelihood, mitigation strategies to minimise potential impacts, and the necessary contingency response and resources
- Business recovery plan
- Data backup and security
- Disaster scenario planning and its potential impacts on business functions and the wellbeing of and supports available to staff, volunteers and clients
- Planned response to Fire Danger Ratings and Bushfire Warnings
- Recommendations on emergency management plan from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- Maintenance of fire protection and firefighting equipment
- Insurance.

A robust disaster-specific business continuity plan helps a business identify and plan for risks and impacts and devise strategies that assist the Neighbourhood Centre in maintaining, returning to, or adapting the operation as quickly as possible to provide support to their local community. Neighbourhood Centres plan to further develop their plan in the Strategy's implementation stage to increase its resilience and capacity to support bushfire-affected communities.

Additional resources:

- Emergency Management and Recovery Plan Guide - <https://www.business.gov.au/Risk-management/Emergency-management/How-to-prepare-an-emergency-management-plan>
- Queensland Government Emergency Planning - <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/safety-and-prevention/hazards/hazardous-chemicals/managing-hazchem-risks/emergency-planning>.
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Emergency Planning Guide - <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/planning/Documents/QFES-Emergency-Planning-Guidance.pdf>
- Preparing Your Business for Natural Disasters - <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/protecting-business/disaster-resilience/preparing-disasters>

Strategy E: Enhance resource sharing and collaboration among Neighbourhood Centres.



A core principle of Neighbourhood Centre philosophy is collaboration - working together to achieve a better outcome for local communities. The participants expressed early in their engagement with the Strategy that they value its collaborative process. As many have more experience in the context of floods and cyclones, they were particularly keen to learn from Neighbourhood Centres that have supported communities through bushfires. The participants consistently identified that collaboration through sharing resources and knowledge will strengthen their capacity to support bushfire-affected communities.

Two platforms for collaboration were identified throughout the consultation process:

3.6.1 . Neighbourhood Centres Bushfire Resilience Forum and Resource Library

The Forum will be an online ‘hub’ where Neighbourhood Centres from in and between the Central Queensland and Sunshine Coast region can share and access resources on disaster management, building community resilience and supporting bushfire-affected communities. It will also be a space where Neighbourhood Centres can initiate and participate in discussions of these topics.

The participants have indicated that they would like to “gain a broader range of knowledge and ideas” on topics such as:

- Incident management
- Disaster-specific business continuity planning
- Effective communication during a disaster emergency
- Volunteer management processes
- Disaster preparedness initiatives
- Communicating disaster information with linguistically diverse groups
- Stories and case studies of effective approaches to supporting bushfire-affected communities.

During the online consultations, the participants also highlighted the potential value of the Forum and Resource Library for new staff. Two notable comments are included below:

• *“[It] would be really good...if people new to the job can go have a look at case studies, programs and initiatives that other [Neighbourhood] Centres have tried in that disaster preparation space...so [we’re] not starting from scratch and re-inventing the wheel”.*

• *“It would be a good time saver if... people can share what’s worked and what hasn’t”.*

Additionally, several participants acknowledged that interactions and sharing of stories through the Forum could foster connections among Neighbourhood Centres and support for each other.

“It’s important to hear from each other, to be able to help out communities. It’s important for us to build each other up”, a regional Neighbourhood Centre representative remarked.

The Resource Forum and Resource Library are currently located on the QFCA website (see screen capture below) and will be further developed. Through increased technological capacity, content sourcing, and coordination of the Forum and Resource Library, participants will have greater access and utilisation of these online platforms to share resources, learnings, ideas and experiences, and interact with peers, both old and new.

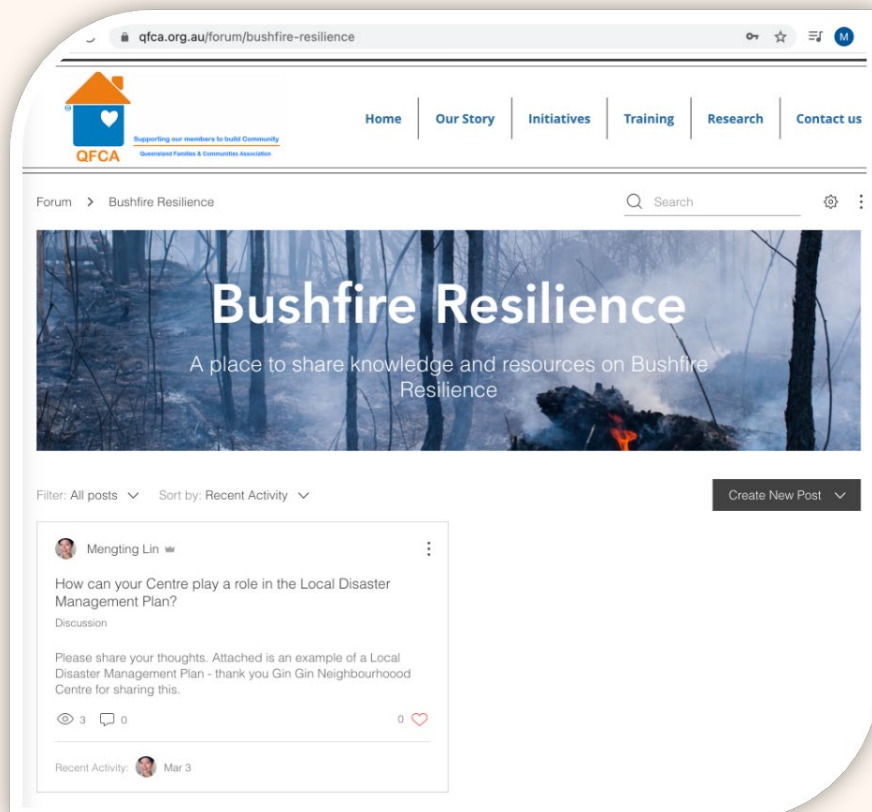


Figure 15. Screen capture of the Bushfire Resilience Forum



3.6.2 . Neighbourhood Centres Disaster Resource Directory

The participants suggested developing an online Neighbourhood Centres Disaster Resource Directory (Disaster Resource Directory) to open pathways for collaboration across Neighbourhood Centres. Reflecting on their experience with supporting disaster-affected communities, many participants shared the challenges of working alone with limited staffing and resources to respond to their community's needs. They believe that assistance from other Neighbourhood Centres during disasters will enhance their capacity to support disaster-affected community. It will also assist the Neighbourhood Centres plan for disasters.

The Disaster Resource Directory for Central Queensland and the Sunshine Coast region is to outline all the Neighbourhood Centres in the area and for each:

- The key contact person for disaster management,
- Types of disaster support services offered,
- Disaster support resources available, and
- The capacity to support other Neighbourhood Centres in times of disasters.

Figure 14. Sample Neighbourhood Centres Disaster Resource Directory

| Name of Neighbourhood Centre | Key contact person and contact details | Disaster support services offered | Disaster support resources | Capacity to support other NC in times of disaster |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| | | Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency relief • Food pantry | <i>Example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mobile showers</i> • <i>Meeting space</i> | <i>Example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Volunteers</i> • <i>Vehicle</i> |
| ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |



Summary

In developing the Queensland Neighbourhood Centres Strategy for Bushfire Resilience, twenty Neighbourhood Centres from in and between Central Queensland and the Sunshine Coast region came together to reflect on their current work on bushfire resilience. They draw on their experiences and insights in supporting local communities through disasters such as monsoons, floods and droughts, to identify strategies that can be implemented to enhance their capacity in this space. Neighbourhood Centres hope that by communicating their capacity to support disaster-affected communities in this Strategy, stronger connections and collaborations can be created with other stakeholders in disaster management, so that communities can work more cohesively to strengthen their resilience to bushfires.



With the prediction that the rising frequency and intensity of extreme weather conditions will make the Australian environment more vulnerable to disasters, all communities, including Queensland, will face greater challenges. Being locally based and connected to the community, Neighbourhood Centres have valuable insights into the issues and barriers experienced by disaster-affected individuals; and their need for community-based responses during and post-disaster. It is critical that Neighbourhood Centres are included in local disaster management planning so that these insights, which are the voices of local communities, are considered and that citizens can participate more actively in the preparation for, response to and recovery of bushfires.

Appendix A – Survey for Neighbourhood Centres

Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Bushfire Resilience - Survey for Neighbourhood Centres

Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, we greatly appreciate your participation. Please make yourself a cup of tea - this survey should take about the time (10-15 minutes) it takes to drink it!

Please ensure that you keep this email conversation or browser page open until you have completed all questions and press 'submit'. Keeping the page open is the only way to return to the survey if you are interrupted midway.

Neighbourhood and Community Centres often play a vital role in disaster management, including preparation, response and recovery following one or multiple disasters. As such, this survey seeks to understand and highlight the unique roles, functions and approaches that the Centres bring. It also aims to identify the needs and opportunities for Centres across the state to grow their capacity in supporting their local communities throughout the stages of bushfires.

Findings from this survey will be collated and provided back to Centres to guide us in developing strategies with Neighbourhood and Community Centres on approaches that:

- (i) Expand and deepen collaborative disaster response work, in particular, to raise ownership, leadership, capacity and self-determination within local communities,
- (ii) Advocate for recognition and resources from local and state government, and other key stakeholders, so that Centres can continue and grow its active involvement in disaster management, and
- (iii) Identifies how the Queensland Families and Communities Association can support Centres in the disaster management space.

We look forward to hearing your stories, ideas and initiatives on supporting the Queensland communities.

Please note: The survey is targeted to Neighbourhood and Community Centres and other organisations with equivalent funding and roles. The term 'Centre' is used to represent all of these organisations.

* Required

Acknowledgement: We would like to recognise that the Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Bushfire Resilience is jointly funded under the Commonwealth/State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.



Queensland Government



Australian Government

Before we get started...

Basic details about your participation and the Centre you represent.



1. Q1. Are you willing to complete this survey? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

2. Q2. Are you willing for the information you provide to be used for research and evaluation purposes? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

3. Q3. What is the name of your Neighbourhood/Community Centre? *

4. Q4. What is the governance structure of your organisation? (Please note: If you are managing more than one Centre, please indicate in accordance to the Centre you are representing this response.) *

Mark only one oval.

A local government council

A national non-profit organisation

An incorporated association

Company limited by guarantee

Local community based governance committee

Committee containing members outside local community

No board or committee

Deductible gift receipt status

**Neighbourhood
Centres and
Bushfire
Management**

For the development of strategies that support Neighbourhood Centres across the state to grow their capacity in supporting bushfire-affected communities, Neighbourhood Centres expressed that they would like to learn about each other's experience and wisdom in the disaster management space. Neighbourhood Centres would like to hear from other Centres on the following questions.



5. Q5. How does bushfire impact your community based on what you have seen and/or heard during past events? *

6. Q6a. What is your understanding of Neighbourhood/Community Centres' role in bushfire preparation, response and recovery? *

7. Q6b. Does your Centre place a greater focus on any one aspect? *

Mark only one oval.

- Preparation
- Response
- Recovery
- We play an active role in all three aspects.
- We don't play a role in these aspects.

8. Q6c. Please share a story that illustrates how your Centres have supported bushfire-affected communities. *



9. Q6d. Are there any barriers that your Centre face in supporting communities in preparing for, responding to and recovery from bushfires?

10. Q6e. What strategies do you think can be developed to enable Neighbourhood/Community Centres better support communities in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a bushfire? *

11. Q7. When working with volunteers in providing support to bushfire-affected communities, how does your Neighbourhood/Community Centre organise and manage the volunteers? Please describe any systems that you have been or are using. *

12. Q8. How would you describe the connectedness and cohesiveness of your community? *

Mark only one oval.

- Strong, our community is very resilient
- Average, we are somewhat resilient and can benefit from more connectedness
- Weak, we have a long way to go to build up our resilience
- Do not know



13. Q9. How would you describe your Neighbourhood/Community Centres connection with your local community members? *

14. *Mark only one oval.*

Option 1

15. Q10. How would you describe your Neighbourhood/Community Centres' connection with the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) population in the community? *

16. Q11. Please outline the group(s) in your community that you believe is most affected by bushfire. *

17. Q12a. How does your Neighbourhood/Community Centre communicate with community members? *

Check all that apply.

- Via an information board
- Via a newsletter
- Via our website
- Via our Facebook page and other social media
- Via telephone
- Via text-messaging

Other: _____

18. Q12b. Do you see a need to increase the effectiveness of the communication with community members? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

19. Q13. Please list the key disaster management, response and support organisations in your community. *

Thank
You

The Queensland Families and Communities Association sincerely appreciates your time and valuable contribution to this survey.

If you wish to provide feedback or discuss any aspects of this survey, please contact Mengting Lin at disasterprojects@qfca.org.au or 0476 281 288.



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Appendix B – Survey for Local Stakeholders

Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Bushfire Resilience - Survey for Local Stakeholders

Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, we greatly appreciate your participation. Please make yourself a cup of tea - this survey should take about the time (10-15 minutes) it takes to drink it!

In line with Queensland Families and Communities Association's vision to foster thriving communities that are self-directed, connected and resources, the purpose of the Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Bushfire Resilience is to build the social capacity of Neighbourhood and Community Centres to support bushfire-affected communities.

The purpose of this Survey is to provide an opportunity for various organisations and service providers' to share insights on ways to work collaboratively in responding to the needs of bushfire-affected communities.

We look forward to hearing your stories, ideas and initiatives on supporting the Queensland communities.

For further information, please contact Mengting Lin at disasterprojects@qfca.org.au or 0476 281 288.

* Required

Acknowledgement: We would like to recognise that the Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Strategy for Bushfire Resilience is jointly funded under the Commonwealth/State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.



Queensland Government



Australian Government

Supporting bushfire-affected communities

1. Q1. What is your understanding of Neighbourhood/Community Centres' role in bushfires preparation, response and recovery? *



2. Q2. How does existing collaboration with Neighbourhood/Community Centres add value to your organisation's role in bushfire preparation, response and recovery? *

3. Q3. What kind of collaboration/partnership opportunities with Neighbourhood/Communities Centres would you be interested in for supporting bushfire-affected communities?

4. Q4. In Queensland, there are some Neighbourhood/Community Centres who do not receive State Government funding. What are some ideas/strategies on how these Centres can attain funding? *

5. Q5. What is your organisation's capacity to provide temporary to medium-term care for pets and livestock during a bushfire? *

6. Additional comments

Thank
You

The Queensland Families and Communities Association sincerely appreciates your time and valuable contribution to this survey.

If you wish to provide feedback or discuss any aspects of this survey, please contact Mengting Lin at disasterprojects@qfca.org.au or 0476 281 288.



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