

## CSDC Case Study: Influencing Emergency Management governance

### *How do place-based NGOs engage effectively with Emergency Management governance?*

Effective, contextualized disaster adaptation is informed by a nuanced understanding of communities, especially community vulnerabilities and strengths. This understanding is often lacking in current Emergency Management approaches. Local social service NGOs have engaged with Emergency Management to increase understanding of the needs of local communities and how best to work with them to reduce disaster impacts.

Here are some definitions of common roles related to disasters management undertaken by place-based NGOs:

#### **Disaster Support**

the roles, or possible roles, of place-based social service NGOs in the disaster management cycle. May include:

- providing Preparedness Support to communities
- meeting material, emotional and cultural needs after a disaster
- providing disaster recovery support
- disaster mitigation advice to government agencies

See also [Roles of Place-based NGOs in Disaster Management](#) diagram.

Gaining a clear understanding of these roles is an important aspect of disaster risk reduction.

#### **Vulnerability Literacy**

Education and awareness raising with Emergency Management and Government agencies to enable the identification and understanding of socio-economic vulnerability in the disaster space. Effective vulnerability literacy includes a corresponding ability to identify strengths and solutions that exist in communities.

#### **Secondary Consultation**

The advice and local knowledge about community needs in disasters provided by place-based NGOs to government agencies and larger NGOs. This may include attendance at recovery or preparedness meetings or ad hoc requests for information. This secondary consultation role is not formally recognised or outlined in any contracting arrangements.

Following are some examples of how place-based social service NGOs have been fostering a connection with Local Emergency Management.

#### **Snowy Monaro**

Monaro Family Support Service (MFSS) has been working collaboratively with Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) to provide NGO Disaster Support since the Black Summer Bushfires. MFSS CEO, Pauline Cook, was invited as a guest to the Council's Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) Meeting. The Committee had commenced a process of mapping the assets in the region that are vulnerable to disasters, starting with infrastructure. Pauline was able to highlight that community vulnerability (and strengths) are much more complex to map and the knowledge and expertise of local NGOs can increase the

Vulnerability Literacy of Emergency Management personnel. MFSS is now an ongoing guest at the LEMC meetings with the aim of informing the Committee's vulnerability mapping process.

Ongoing and meaningful links between Emergency Management and place-based NGOs are essential for a well informed and prepared community. This requires mechanisms for sharing information – NGOs providing a picture of community needs and capabilities and Emergency Managers providing hazard awareness and preparedness information. In order to maintain this flow of information, MFSS has introduced a standing item to the regular Monaro Regional Interagency meeting to provide updates from Emergency Management and gather community needs and activities to be communicated back to the LEMC.

### **Northern Rivers**

The frequency and scale of flooding events in Northern Rivers has led to regular contact between the community and local Emergency Management. Northern Rivers communities also have active grassroots community networks with experience across multiple disasters. This has led to a strong awareness and connection between the social service NGOs and Emergency Management.

Resilient Lismore, in partnership with a number of Neighbourhood Centres and other social service NGOs, has been able to strengthen this existing connection to highlight the value of place-based NGOs to effective emergency management. The Community Resilience Network (CRN) Model is underway with three Local Government Areas – Kyogle, Lismore and Richmond Valley. Kyogle has a well established community based CRN that is currently chaired by the Council Community Recovery Officer (CRO). Richmond Valley has an established council-led CRN and the Lismore CRN is re-establishing after a transition from the previous Local Emergency Recovery Committee which formed shortly after the disaster in 2022. Implementation of a regional CRN, with operational communication flow and reporting from community organisations and networks to and from the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) is being considered.

### **How to influence Emergency Management governance**

Develop an understanding of formal Emergency Management governance

- see Emergency Management Terminology, [www.ncoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Emergency-Management-Terminology.pdf](http://www.ncoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Emergency-Management-Terminology.pdf)
- enquire with your Local Government

Engaging with Emergency Management will differ across regions, depending on:

- formal Emergency Management governance structures and their understanding of working with the social service NGO sector
- the capacity and capability of local social service NGOs to engage with Emergency Management

Social service NGOs, consider:

1. Coordination of place-based social service NGOs – Who does what in emergencies? Who speaks for the local sector?
2. Local social service NGOs need to provide clear messaging to Emergency Management – What we offer. How we work with you.
3. Develop clear pathways for ongoing, two-way communication and action – Government Community Resilience Networks, sector interagency groups, other.