



Emergency Management

August 2021

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S DISASTER RESILIENCE NEWSLETTER

NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

On 1 July 2021, the Australian Government announced the establishment of the new natural hazards and disaster research centre, with \$85 million in funding to deliver critical research into natural hazards.

The establishment of Natural Hazards Research Australia continues the coordinated national research effort of two Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs), the Bushfire CRC and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, and will address the major challenges arising from recent natural hazards, including the 2019-20 bushfire season.



The new centre will focus on natural hazard resilience and disaster risk reduction to support the needs of emergency service agencies and communities in preparing for, responding to and recovering from future natural hazard disasters. The new centre has three overarching objectives:

1. The protection of human life, minimised harm and suffering;
2. Well prepared and resilient communities; and
3. Research that translates into action.

For further information, visit the [Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC website](#).

NEW SAFECOM CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPOINTED



Julia Waddington-Powell, with experience in health and emergency management, commenced as the new Chief Executive of the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM) on 2nd August 2021.

Mrs Waddington-Powell will oversee the final construction phase of the earthquake-resistant headquarters where the SES, CFS, SAFECOM and MFS leadership will permanently unite for the first time in state history. Project completion is expected by the 2021/22 bushfire season.





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PREPARING AUSTRALIA PROGRAM

In May 2021 the creation of the \$600 million Preparing Australia Program (PAP) was announced. The new program will enable the Commonwealth to directly fund projects that mitigate risk, that minimise the impact of large-scale natural disasters and reduce the cost of recovery support.

The program will be delivered in two components:

- Preparing Australian Homes Program (PAHP): will provide up to \$200 million for eligible households to increase the resilience of private residences. This includes working with the insurance sector.
- Preparing Australian Communities Program (PACP): will provide up to \$400 million for public projects of local and national significance. The community initiatives will be locally identified and locally risk led and will help address risks outside communities' control.

Round 1 of PAHP will open in October 2021, while PACP will open in 2022.

Program design is underway and the National Recovery and Resilience Agency will consult with stakeholders to ensure the program meets community needs. You can register at the [PAP website](#) to be kept up to date as the program develops.



HELPING CHILDREN FEEL SAFE AND HEARD DURING EMERGENCIES



Save the Children

Children in bushfire-affected areas have reported they don't have many opportunities to have a say in their community. This is particularly worrisome given that the 2019-20 bushfires demonstrated how children's needs were widely misunderstood and overlooked during the response and recovery phases.

Save the Children have launched **Our Voice** to consider these issues. The program gives children and young people the opportunity to provide feedback about emergency management in their community, and a platform to share ideas about what would benefit other children and young people in the community. They design events and materials to communicate their recommendations directly to decision-makers.

Save the Children is currently delivering the **Our Voice** program in South Australia. It is hoped it will give more children and young people the opportunity to speak up and be heard on important issues.



Shoalhaven, NSW: The *Our Voice* program brought together students and key stakeholders for a Learning Exchange at the Emergency Operations Centre. The group toured the centre, learnt how different agencies coordinate responses during an emergency and engaged in two-way discussions about issues of importance.

Further information can be found on the [Save the Children](#) website.



Each decision and action makes us more vulnerable to disasters – or more resilient to them. Thus disaster risk reduction involves every part of society, every part of government, and every part of the professional and private sector." United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

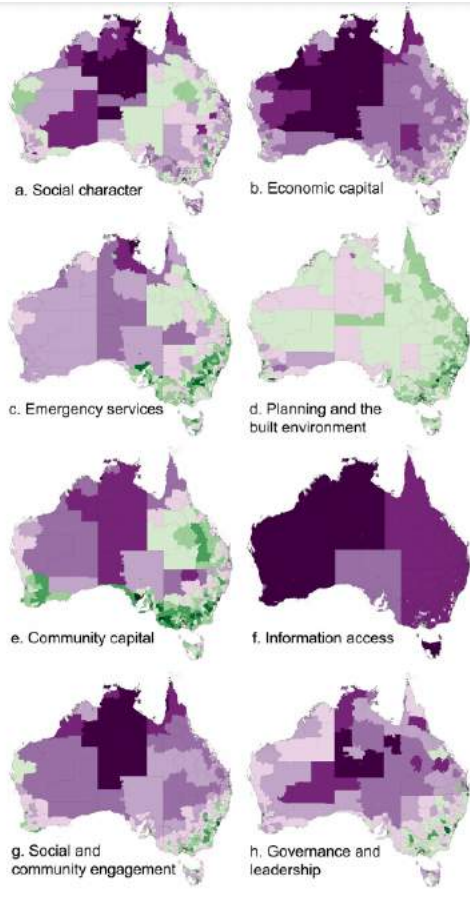


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DISASTER RESILIENCE IN AUSTRALIA:

A geographic assessment using an index of coping and adaptive capacity



The index ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 is higher capacity for that disaster resilience theme.

A national-scale assessment of disaster resilience, using the Australian Disaster Resilience Index, has been conducted. The Index assesses resilience at three levels: overall capacity for disaster resilience, coping and adaptive capacity and disaster resilience across social, economic and institutional domains.

The study found:

- 32% of the population live in an area that has **high** capacity for disaster resilience;
- 52% of the population live in an area that has **moderate** capacity for disaster resilience;
- 16% of the population live in an area that has **low** capacity for disaster resilience;

The distribution of disaster resilience in Australia is strongly influenced by geography. Most metropolitan and inner regional areas were assessed as having high capacity for disaster resilience, although areas of low capacity for disaster resilience can occur in metropolitan areas.

Community capital and social cohesion were also factors in determining the level of disaster resilience across Australia.

Further information can be found on the [BNHCRC website](#).

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S SEVERE WEATHER

Severe weather impacted across South Australia from Thursday 15 July 2021 until Wednesday 28 July 2021, with more storms expected. Widespread showers and strong winds were experienced across the entire state. 100km/h winds and greater were recorded at Cape Borda, Wudinna, Mount Crawford and Kadina. Minor flood warnings were issued for Bremer River while very large waves impacted the western and southern exposed coasts.

SES attended a high number of jobs during this period including:

- 1097 trees down tasks
- 446 severe weather tasks, including assisting residents and flood salvage tasks.
- 13 provide equipment tasks

South Australia also went into lockdown on Tuesday 20 July 2021, making an already busy time, even more complex.

SES thanks all other agencies and local government for their assistance during this period.



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WHY A KILLER U.S. HEATWAVE POINTS TO A STIFLING FUTURE FOR OUR CITIES

Cities across the US and Canada have seen record temperatures across their nations this summer causing extended heatwaves and devastating wildfires. Dr Sebastian Pfautsch, a specialist on urban heat at Western Sydney University, says this should be a good reminder that the heat is coming, and we are not prepared for it.

Dr Pfautsch raises concerns about the new developments on the fringes of Australian cities. He believes that due to poor planning regulation, residents have been abandoned to wholly predictable heat extremes.

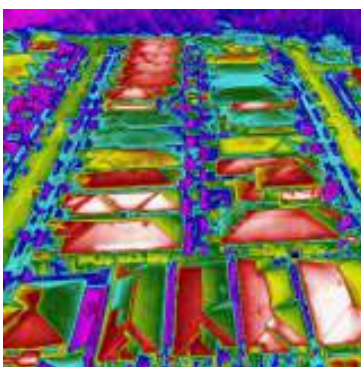
It is not just that large houses on small blocks leave no room for trees, Dr Pfautsch says. The little space left between them provides no room for recreation and serve to increase heat, with side-passages often home to air-conditioning systems that spew heated air across dividing fences.



He also sees other willful mistakes. Unshaded black roads absorb heat during the day only to radiate it at night, extending the heat of the day into the evening. Roofs, exterior walls and even driveways created by developers in currently fashionable dark shades serve to exacerbate the impact, he says.

*"It is inhumane to expect people to live like this in the temperatures we anticipate,"
"I can't say it more strongly than that."*

All this raises questions of environmental and climate justice, Stephen Livesley, an associate professor at the University of Melbourne and an expert on the benefits of urban forests, says, as the suburbs most affected are often the most affordable "We are pushing some of the most vulnerable people in our society into these low tree, low services environments, with poor public transport infrastructure."



He agrees with Dr Pfautsch that planning regulations and incentives need to be changed. One simple fix would be to encourage lighter-coloured roofs to reflect solar radiation. And using recycled water to ensure public parks and nature strips are kept moist would add a green buffer during heatwaves.

"They may only cool the surrounds by a degree but that could be the difference between someone going to hospital or dying".

Dr Pfautsch says "Planting trees is not enough." Instead, not only should we be tackling climate change, we should be totally re-imagining how we build our suburbs.

Reported in the [Sydney Morning Herald](#).





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USING THE RIGHT WORDS



There is a plethora of information and guidance available on how the timing of communication, appropriateness to its audience and its content are all extremely relevant.

The use of vocabulary and terminology has been concerning at times, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the use of the word 'vulnerable' has been raised as a potential barrier to those who needed help.

Simply put, many of the people who could be considered 'vulnerable' in terms of being at risk of contracting Covid-19 simply did not associate themselves with the word and therefore did not seek assistance. 'Vulnerable' is, therefore, a potentially alienating word.

But communication can also provide a positive turning point for people's recovery. Whether it is verbal, written or translated – the fundamentally important aspects of communication are timing, context and tone, as well as consideration of the intended audience and the potential effects on different people.

It is essential to embed empathy in all messaging, whether in a leaflet, part of an official briefing or public speech, or even when supporting someone on the front line – and this can be learned and developed.

It is also important to remember that language used across command and control, during collaboration – in meetings, documentation, working groups, or correspondence – should always be respectful and humanised.

More information is available in the [Crisis Response Journal, June 2021 edition](#).

RECOVERY MATTERS WEBINARS

Catch the latest recovery themed webinars from the [Australian Institute Disaster Resilience \(AIDR\)](#). The webinars were part of a project which won an EMPA Australia award for excellence in communication in recovery in 2021.



[Post Traumatic Growth: Exploring the 10 years Beyond Bushfires Report](#)

[Indigenous Perspectives of Disaster Recovery](#)



[Navigating the Financial Impacts of Disasters](#)



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ASSISTANCE DOGS NEW DIGITAL ID CARDS



An 'assistance dog' is a dog specially trained and accredited to assist a person with a disability and that has met the state standards for public access rights. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), assistance dogs are specifically defined and are afforded guaranteed access to all public places in Australia.

This federal law is supported by state and territory laws that provide further provisions for assistance dogs to be recognised. However, there is no national form of identification and assistance dog organisations prescribe their own identification. This makes the job of evacuation centre workers even more difficult to distinguish what dogs are bonafide assistance dogs and which are not.

Assistance dog fraud is not new, but only in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory is it illegal to pretend a dog is a bona fide assistance dog when it is not. In other states, it is legal for people to purchase, without verification, a range of assistance dog identifications and paraphernalia.

The role and status of assistance dogs during disasters is not well researched. What little empirical evidence there is suggests that the challenge of validating the legitimacy of assistance animals in emergency conditions remains unresolved and that the needs of assistance animal users at evacuation centres are not well considered by emergency planners.

To combat this growing concern, Assistance Dogs International developed a convenient and easy-to-use ID card that is stored on a mobile device and that can be used by Assistance Dogs International accredited members. The ID card has been trialled in Australia by Assistance Dogs Australia and will be trialled by Vet Dogs and Guide Dogs for the Blind Foundation in the USA. It has received positive reviews from users.

For further information visit [AIDR's website](#).

DISASTER RESILIENCE

To stay up to date between editions of EM News, sign up for Neil Dufty's *[This Week in Disaster Resilience](#)* for a range of articles related to disaster resilience throughout Australia and the world.



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