Identifying organisational emergency preparedness

A field test report on the application of the Resilient Community Organisations toolkit from the Australian Council of Social Services.

The University of Sydney’s Hazards Research Group (HRG) and Centre for Disability Research and Policy (CDRP)
Identifying organisational emergency preparedness

A field test report on the application of the Australian Council of Social Services, Resilient Community Organisations toolkit

April, 2017

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The team would also like to thank all the participants who have engaged in the review for their excellent contribution.
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Acronyms

Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS)
Auslan – Australian sign language
CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CDRP – Centre for Disability Research and Policy at the University of Sydney
CSO – Community Service Organisation
DSO – Disability Support Organisation
DiDRR – Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction
DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction
DPO – Disabled People’s Organisation
EMs – Emergency Managers (emergency service agencies)
FACS – NSW Family and Community Services
FR NSW – Fire and Rescue NSW
LEMC – Local Emergency Management Committee
LEMO – Local Emergency Management Officer
LGA – Local Government Area
NDIS – National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSW – New South Wales
NSW SES – New South Wales State Emergency Services
NSW RFS – New South Wales Rural Fire Service
NSW VRA – New South Wales Volunteer Rescue Association
RCO – Resilient Community Organisations ACOSS, 2015

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Executive Summary

This report details the field testing of an existing organisational preparedness tool, the ACOSS Resilient Community Organisations toolkit.1

With the support of ACOSS, the project team field tested this RCO toolkit as one element of the Phase 2 Local Emergency Preparedness Workshops2 and continued this in Phase 3 of the project conducted in the three study locations in October 2016. Workshop participants and other community service organisations and organisations representing people with disability were invited to review the usefulness of the RCO toolkit for their organisation using a specifically designed review format. In total, 17 participants from 12 organisations reviewed the RCO toolkit.

Overall the RCO toolkit was regarded favourably as a useful resource to assist community service organisations in assessing, benchmarking and improving their organisational preparedness for natural hazard events. There were also some drawbacks to applying this tool in the disability sector. From the review feedback, three areas of recommendations for improved relevance for the disability sector were formulated: dissemination, utility and applicability. These are presented at the end of this Report.

There were also some difficulties with the RCO across all the organisations that reviewed the toolkit. These difficulties speak to the particularities of this part of the community disability sector. This is not to suggest that a unique resource is developed for each part of the community sector but rather that a parent resource such as the RCO toolkit includes resources that are most useful to different parts of the community sector and from which all parts of the sector can learn.

A particular difficulty for the community disability sector is workload and lack of dedicated roles to ensure organisational preparedness at a time of significant sectoral change with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Many community disability organisations are small; often staff balance administrative tasks, supporting people with disability so that organisational tasks such as emergency preparedness may be given a low priority. This means that no matter how useful the RCO toolkit may be, it is unlikely staff will find the time to search out this resource and work through the three components of the toolkit. That said, the organisations that participated in the review saw good opportunities to work through the RCO toolkit and particularly if supported to do so by their local emergency managers. Disability Interagency Meetings were seen as excellent networking opportunities for buy-in of DSOs for undertaking natural hazard preparedness, and a good opportunity to engage with emergency managers.

The RCO toolkit does not include the fundamental principle underpinning the community disability sector which is clearly articulated in the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020. That is, the critical importance of individualised and person centred approaches in all aspects of the lives of people with disability. Organisational preparedness is unlikely to succeed if based on grouping people by diagnosis or impairment. What may suit one person is unlikely to be the same for the next. The most effective way to ensure each individual’s resilience, capabilities and support needs are taken into account is to include people with disability as informants and key decision makers in emergency preparedness planning rather than assuming that they are vulnerable clients to be managed by others. In this way organisations will be better prepared for natural hazard events in ways that meet the needs of the people with disability and at the same time meet organisational needs.

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1 ACOSS, Resilient Community Organisations is available at: [http://resilience.acoss.org.au/](http://resilience.acoss.org.au/)
1. Introduction

The University of Sydney’s Hazards Research Group (HRG) and Centre for Disability Research and Policy (CDRP) partnered to lead a two-year project designed to enhance community resilience for natural hazard emergencies by developing knowledge and capacity for disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction (IDRR). The focus of this project was enabling Community Service Organisations (CSOs), Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), Local Government and local businesses to work collaboratively with Emergency Managers (EMs) and involve people with disability in emergency preparedness. The project took place in three NSW local government areas: Sutherland, Hawkesbury, and Taree. The project was funded by the Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP), a scheme under the Natural Disaster Resilience Program, which involves the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments through the National Partnership Agreement on Natural Disaster Resilience. To find out more about the project visit the project’s website at:  

1.1 Report Description

This report details the field testing of the Resilient Community Organisations (RCO) toolkit which was developed by the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS). This report forms one of a series of reports from this project (the series of reports and how they can be accessed are listed at page 21).

As noted in the CRIP Agreement, Office of Emergency Management and University of Sydney, the project team proposed developing an organisational self assessment tool (or OSAT) to assist organisations to identify their preparedness for natural hazard emergencies.

Early in 2015 the team identified the newly available RCO toolkit. Following discussions with ACOSS and the Office of Emergency Management, it was decided to field test the RCO toolkit and evaluate its usefulness for organisations serving people with disability rather than to develop a new tool. This decision was based on findings from our Phase One workshops3 where CSOs identified being overwhelmed by the amount of preparedness information and resources available, some of which was contradictory and which mitigated against developing organisation preparedness.

1.2 Specific aims of the field-testing

The aims for field testing the RCO toolkit were to:

- Identify usefulness of the RCO toolkit for organisations working with people with disability;
- Engage organisations in a process of self reflection using the RCO toolkit;
- Develop recommendations for amending the toolkit to ensure maximum utility for organisations supporting people with disability.

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3 Knowledge base workshops in the LGA: A report outlining the process and outcomes of the disability inclusive emergency preparedness workshops can be accessed at:  

Identifying organisational emergency preparedness: A field test report on the application of the Australian Council of Social Services, Resilient Community Organisations toolkit
2. Australian Council of Social Services, Resilient Community Organisations toolkit

RCO is an online toolkit developed by the Australian Council of Social Services⁴.

The RCO toolkit was developed following research⁵ undertaken by ACOSS in 2013 funded by the National Climate Change Adaption Facility. This research identified a lack of preparedness and resilience of community organisations to climate change, and extreme weather events.

The RCO toolkit aims to assist community sector organisations to measure, benchmark and improve their resilience to disasters and emergencies.

The toolkit has three components as follows:

- **A Disaster Resilience Benchmarking Tool** to assess current state of disaster preparedness and identify areas of improvement;
- **Six Steps to Disaster Resilience** which provides information and resources for organisations to take action to improve resilience;
- **Resilient Community Organisations Templates**.

The development of the toolkit was informed by an international review of existing disaster resilience and climate adaptation tools for community organisations and created in consultation with subject matter experts. It adopts a risk management approach in line with the Australian/New Zealand Standard ISO 31000 (ACOSS, 2016).

3. Field testing of the RCO toolkit

3.1 Recruitment of participants

The project team used three approaches to recruit disability support organisations (DSOs) and community service organisations (CSOs) to undertake the review of the RCO toolkit. These are summarised in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment Method</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recruitment of participating DSOs and CSOs who attended the Phase One Local Information Sharing workshops</td>
<td>Invitation was extended to 18 DSOs and CSOs who had attended the Local Information Sharing Workshops which took place in April and May 2016 in each study location (Hawkesbury, Taree, and Sutherland). The Project Manager initiated contact via telephone with organisations in September 2016, following up with messages and emails when necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Recruitment of participating organisations</td>
<td>The project’s Phase Two workshops were undertaken in each study location in October 2016.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Participants were introduced to the RCO toolkit as detailed in the Report on Phase Two Workshops October 2016\(^6\).

Organisational representatives were invited to leave their contact details with the Project Manager for later follow up (Appendix 1).

3. Via the Project’s social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter)

Invitations issued at the Project’s Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/disabilitynaturaldisasterstudy/

And the Project’s Twitter Account: https://twitter.com/PWD_DRR

Table 2 provides details of the stakeholders who took part in the review of the RCO toolkit.

**Table 2. Participants in field testing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Groups</th>
<th>Recruitment of organisations who attended first phase Local Information Sharing workshops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 – Hawkesbury (DSOs); 5 – Taree – (DSOs); 2 - Sutherland - (DSOs).</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Groups</th>
<th>Recruitment of organisations attending Phase Two workshops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hawkesbury – 5 (2 DSOs, 1 Emergency Manager, 1 Local Gov rep); Taree – 3 (1 DSO Board member, 2 Disaster Management representatives from NSW Health) Sutherland – 0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Groups</th>
<th>Social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Manager (EM)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Field testing process

Organisations who agreed to participate in the review of the RCO toolkit were sent Resilient Community Organisations Review Information (Appendix 2) via email and invited to review the toolkit at a convenient time.

- Follow up interviews were conducted between November 2016 and February 2017;
- Follow up methods included using online conferencing so the organisation representative/s and the Project Manager could review the RCO toolkit together, email with feedback, telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings.

Reflective questions (Appendix 2) for the review were based on three steps: appraisal of the utility of the RCO tool for the organisation; critique of the relevance of the toolkit for the organisation; and planning, to formulate recommendations for improving the utility of the toolkit.

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Identifying organisational emergency preparedness: A field test report on the application of the Australian Council of Social Services, Resilient Community Organisations toolkit (Raban et al., 2005; Ward and McCotter, 2004). An additional issue covered was balancing the duty of care to staff and clients as this issue was raised in the Phase One Local Information Sharing Workshops.

3.3 Data collection

Table 3 summarises the methods of engagement with organisations participating in the field testing of the RCO toolkit.

Table 3. Engagement with stakeholders in review of RCO toolkit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sept 2016-2017</th>
<th>Recruitment of participants from Phase One Local Information Sharing Workshops (n=9)</th>
<th>Recruitment of participants from Phase Two Local Emergency Preparedness workshops (n=7)</th>
<th>Social media (n=1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to participate</td>
<td>Stakeholders contacted: 18 (DSOs/CSOs)</td>
<td>Stakeholders contacted: 8 (CSOs/DSOs/LGA rep/EM/Local business)</td>
<td>Stakeholders contacted: 1 (EM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone conversations: 12</td>
<td>Phone conversations: 7</td>
<td>Phone conversations: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voicemails/messages left: 14</td>
<td>Voicemails/messages left: 4</td>
<td>Emails (including request to call/sending review docs): 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails (including request to call and sending review docs): 12</td>
<td>Emails (including request to call/sending review docs): 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response: 6 orgs</td>
<td>No response: 1 stakeholder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to participate: 3 orgs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited: 9</td>
<td>Recruited: 7</td>
<td>Recruited: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement to arrange follow up</th>
<th>Participants contacted: 9</th>
<th>Participants contacted: 7</th>
<th>Participants contacted: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone conversations: 5</td>
<td>Phone conversations: 8</td>
<td>Email: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails sent: 19</td>
<td>Emails: 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages left: 4</td>
<td>Voicemails/messages left: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow up and feedback</th>
<th>Reviews completed: 9</th>
<th>Reviews completed: 7</th>
<th>Reviews completed: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email feedback: 2</td>
<td>Email feedback: 2</td>
<td>Email feedback: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone feedback: 4</td>
<td>Telephone feedback: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online video conferencing: 1</td>
<td>(average length of time: 30 minutes to 45 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Knowledge Base Workshops in the LGAs: A report outlining the process and outcomes of the disability inclusive emergency preparedness workshops. Available at: http://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/cdtr/projects/disasterdisab.shtml
Face to face meetings – 2 duration: 1 hour

3.4 Data analysis method

The data was stored and organised using NVivo 11. A research journal, data annotations and NVivo codes were analysed to capture themes as these emerged. The emerging themes and observations were reviewed, reflecting back on the purpose, aims and objectives of the field testing. Regular meetings were held between the Project Manager and Chief Investigators to support reliability of coding.

4. Findings

There were 5 themes:

- awareness of the RCO website as a resource for organisational preparedness;
- emergency management recommending RCO with CSOs in their networks;
- utility of the RCO toolkit; applicability of RCO toolkit for organisations supporting people with disability; and
- recommendations to improve utility and applicability of the RCO toolkit.

These themes are presented in tables 4 and 5 below.

There were 12 disability/community organisations that completed the field testing ranging from small organisations supporting around 27 people with disability to larger organisations who support up to 1,150 people with disability across NSW.

Of the 17 participants, only 10 (58%) reviewed all components of the RCO toolkit that is, benchmarking, six steps to resilience, and organisational template. For the 7 (42%) participants who were unable to complete the review, the Project Manager proceeded with follow up interviews to understand barriers to completion. The reasons given for not being able to complete the review were as follows: Transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS); balance of roles between supporting individuals and administrative duties such as participating in research projects; brokerage agencies which do not have a direct responsibility for the clients they serve; turnover of staff including senior management affected participating in the field test; already having consistent, well planned organisational preparedness; and unknown reasons where despite multiple attempts to contact some organisations both in the recruitment and follow up stages of this review, there were some organisations who did not respond.

4.1 Reasons why organisations participated in the field testing

- “Perfect timing”: ‘it was just perfect timing, as it is a focus for the organisation’, the organisation was about to initiate developing their organisation’s ‘Business Continuity Framework’;
Identifying organisational emergency preparedness: A field test report on the application of the Australian Council of Social Services, Resilient Community Organisations toolkit

- Natural hazard events: recent experience which had raised the organisation’s awareness levels of need to be better prepared;
- Commitment to disability inclusive disaster preparedness: feeling of responsibility to the people supported by the organisation; and
- Role of organisational representatives: some organisations had dedicated roles to undertake organisational preparedness planning.

In the following pages Table 4 contains overall feedback, and Table 5 comprises feedback on the three components of the RCO toolkit.
Table 4. Overall feedback on RCO toolkit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Recommendations by participants to improve RCO relevance for community disability sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Awareness of the RCO toolkit           | • None of the participants who engaged in the review had previously heard of the RCO toolkit as a resource for organisational preparedness;  
• RCO was not picked up in internet searches by organisations;  
• CSOs were more inclined to go to emergency management websites for resources rather than an organisation representing the community such as ACOSS. | • Review commonly searched terms used by CSOs to source information relating to natural hazard preparedness. Ensure RCO website is picked up by these search terms;  
• Link to RCO from emergency management websites which CSOs are more likely to check as first option;  
• Multipronged approaches to dissemination including:  
  o Local Councils;  
  o NSW Family and Community Services (including on their portals and via their networks);  
  o Emergency services, including Local Emergency Management Committee with their relationship with WelFACS;  
  o National Disability Services (the Australian peak body for non-government disability services) – including on their portals and via their networks;  
  o Interagency networks – each community has interagencies for different welfare sectors, e.g. disability interagency, mental health interagency, homelessness interagency etc. |
| EMs and local council review of toolkit | • Positive review of the RCO toolkit as it was seen as a valuable resource to assist CSOs in their organisational emergency preparedness;  
• Potential use of RCO by EMs when working with community organisations. |
| --- | --- |
| Utility of RCO toolkit | • Website overwhelming for participants with little knowledge of emergency preparedness;  
• On-line resource available 24 hours a day is a positive;  
• Organisation of the RCO toolkit from assessment and benchmarking to resources and information supported by a practical template a positive;  
• Good balance of information that allows CSOs to think critically about their business continuity and natural hazards. |
| Display contact details for additional information and assistance in prominent positions on the RCO website. |
| Applicability of RCO toolkit for organisations that support people with disability | • The RCO toolkit has less emphasis on empowerment of clients, rather a focus on ‘helping’ clients. This is important where:  
  o people with disability may receive little formal support from DSOs. There needs to be clear understanding of responsibilities during natural hazard emergencies;  
  o individual preparedness leads to plans that are responsive to each individual’s own resilience, capabilities, as well as needs that is, person centred;  
  o with a changing sector and introduction of the NDIS, DSOs will only provide support and services as indicated in an individual’s support plan.  
• DSOs have to manage client/family expectations with their duty of care, which at times may be conflicting. This consideration is not addressed by the RCO toolkit;  
• Learning from Others (Step 6) does not articulate the inclusive nature of learning and sharing where knowledge, skills and experience of clients as well as staff and volunteers is an important resource in organisational preparedness; |
| • Incorporate understanding of empowerment of clients. Include links to resources individuals can use to assist their preparedness planning;  
• Incorporate understanding of the importance of person centred approaches to preparedness which are responsive to each person’s own resilience, capabilities and needs;  
• Discuss managing expectations of client/family members, especially where these are in conflict with an organisation’s duty of care;  
• Highlight the value of inclusive approaches to organisational preparedness where clients, staff, volunteers, family members are an important resource;  
• Highlight the opportunity for all organisations to take and interpret information from the RCO toolkit that is applicable to their organisation; |
DSOs regardless of their size or type of services are able to take and interpret information from the RCO toolkit that applies to them. This however is harder for organisations with little or no experience in organisational preparedness;

The RCO toolkit acts as a stimulus for critical thinking, allowing DSOs to consider what could and should happen in the event of a natural hazard emergency, as well as identifying networks available and service gaps.

**Networking**

- Step 2, *Building Networks* was the lowest scored in the benchmarking component by all the participating DSOs and CSOs who completed the benchmarking survey;
- Disability Interagency Networks (DINs) were seen as a networking opportunity to attract collective buy-in for the importance of organisational preparedness, which would improve networking within communities.

All conveners of the DINs covering the three study locations of this project (Hawkesbury, Taree and Sutherland), confirmed that natural hazard preparedness was not regularly reviewed, or a standing item on their DIN meeting agendas.

- Highlight the benefits of the RCO toolkit as a resource for organisations to identify service gaps in their preparedness.

- ACOSS to leverage from opportunities within local DINs as a method to share information about the RCO toolkit, as well as engage in community education in this process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of the RCO Toolkit</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website ‘landing page’</td>
<td>• Instructions on how to use the RCO toolkit are not immediately clear due to instructions being available only by scrolling to the bottom of front page; • CSOs need immediate direct instructions due to busy workloads, or lack of experience in organisational preparedness. Without this DSOs may feel overwhelmed by the introductory webpage and not continue.</td>
<td>• Clear instructions on how the RCO works should be displayed at top of front/landing page: o include numbering for hyperlinks in the top menu, as an additional method to show how the RCO toolkit works. • Include a downloadable one page document providing clear information about the RCO toolkit and how to use it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking Survey</td>
<td>• Benchmarking survey was seen as the most valued component of the RCO toolkit: o Good starting point in a task that organisations may be overwhelmed by; o Benchmarking reinforces/clarifies how prepared an organisation may be; o Scoring assists organisations to prioritise preparedness actions needed in their organisational preparedness; o Questions in survey require senior/board level knowledge of organisation which can act as a barrier for staff in lower level positions; o Organisation’s firewalls may interact with benchmarking survey causing error messages and loss of responses; o Benchmarking needs to be completed for every location of an organisation to identify locations that may be more prepared than others; o Variables for responses were adequate; o Honesty in responses to benchmarking questions is extremely important. It may be difficult to admit an organisation may be</td>
<td>• Provide trouble shooting information with instructions on how to respond to issues on the website. For example what to do if firewalls prevent a part of the website being used. This would particularly benefit those who use the site who have limited technology skills and experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
lacking in some areas, this honesty is crucial to improve overall organisational preparedness;
- Tracking of completed pages of the benchmarking survey was valued where organisations may be interrupted during completion of the survey and need to return to the task at a later time.

**Six Steps to Resilience modules**

- Some terminology used may be too high level for those with little or no experience in organisational preparedness;
- The *Six Steps to Resilience* provides valuable information. Value would be added with the addition of quick, easy to follow practical strategies and information.
  - Elaboration on practical strategies was at times lacking. For example ‘Run Preparedness Workshops’. Organisations with little or no experience in organisational preparedness would benefit from tips/links to resources on how to run these workshops.
- Tracking completed/reviewed modules is not available. Organisations often do not have the time to complete the *Six Steps to Resilience* in one session, and risk forgetting where they were up to when they return to this activity later.

**Disaster Resilience Plan for Community Organisations Template**

- The in depth questions within the template act as an additional resource for organisations to identify service gaps;
- This template provided practical strategy considerations which at times was lacking in the *Six Steps to Resilience*;
- At first glance the template seemed overwhelming due to being 28 pages long;
- Organisations may need approval to use templates other than their organisation’s own templates, policies and procedures. Seeking this approval could cause delays in preparedness;
- The template collects in depth information that would not be needed in procedural guides for field staff in the event of a natural hazard emergency. There are opportunities for a template to be developed to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual feedback on sections:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5b preparing clients – summary refers to ‘avoiding risks’ - Reword to ‘minimise/reduce risk’. Not all risks and particularly by natural hazards can be avoided.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Specific template suggestions:**

- **2C - Emergency Service Organisations (p.8)** – use capital letters for names of services;
- **2E - Identifying our vulnerable clients (p.9)** - *Describe the systems and processes you have in place for*
assist organisations in developing their work flow procedures for field staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>identifying vulnerable clients and the actions to be taken in relation to each group.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Replace ‘Actions to be taken’ with ‘minimise risk’ to avoid staff taking actions that may cause risk to themselves or others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Discussion and Recommendations

Overall, review feedback on the RCO toolkit was positive. However, the RCO toolkit was not known within the sector which suggests a gap in dissemination methods. The fact that this was the first time all participants had seen the RCO toolkit is not so surprising as DSOs/CSOs reported they would not consider looking to ACOSS for resources relating to natural hazard preparedness. When they had searched on line for emergency preparedness resources, the RCO toolkit was not located.

For DSOs and CSOs, busy workloads and lack of experience in natural hazard preparedness act as a barrier and contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed about engaging in organisational preparedness and using the RCO toolkit. Those organisations where no one person is responsible or has a dedicated role for emergency preparedness were less likely to make time for this task. In smaller organisations in particular, staff reported having to balance administrative tasks with direct support roles. Organisations also anticipated that roles will evolve with the transition to the NDIS and it is not yet clear how this will impact their resource availability to engage in preparedness.

All of the above means that organisational preparedness may be less of a priority or not undertaken at all by DSOs or CSOs. Opportunities exist for ACOSS to leverage with existing networks in the field such as the emergency managers and the Disability Interagency Networks to educate CSOs about the usefulness of the RCO toolkit in assisting organisations to undertake emergency preparedness planning.

In its current form, although considered useful, there were adaptations needed for the participating organisations such as extracting and interpreting information relevant to organisational structure, protocols and work flow. The downside of adaptation however is that this may be harder for organisations with little or no experience in preparedness.

A drawback of the RCO toolkit for organisations supporting people with disability is the lack of attention given to inclusive approaches to preparedness, that is, including people with disability and their families and carers as an important resource in planning. Individuals with disability, their families and carers should also be empowered to be key decision makers in their preparedness to ensure individualised and person centred plans are relevant to their own resilience, capabilities and support needs.

Recommendation 1: Dissemination

1.1 That ACOSS review dissemination strategies for the RCO toolkit to include those which more directly target organisations serving people with disability;
1.2 That ACOSS utilise the DINs to educate CSOs and DSOs about the RCO toolkit and its applicability to all community organisations;
1.3 That ACOSS organise appropriate listing and terminology of the RCO toolkit website in search engines so the RCO toolkit is readily identified;
1.4 That ACOSS liaise with emergency management websites to host a link to the RCO toolkit website.

Recommendation 2: Utility

2.1 That ACOSS review the RCO toolkit website to ensure clear instructions for using the RCO toolkit are explicit for first time users;
2.2 That ACOSS provides a ‘frequently asked questions’ section on the website which also includes trouble shooting information;
2.3 That ACOSS review terminology and where possible use lay terms. Where this is not possible, provide a glossary of terms;
2.4 That ACOSS make available a tracking facility so that users can leave their work on the modules of the Six Steps to Resilience part way through and return at a later time;
2.5 That ACOSS include quick and easy to follow practical strategies for preparedness;
2.6 That ACOSS develop templates which can be adapted to assist organisations to include the useful materials from the RCO in ways that align with organisational structure, processes and work flow.

**Recommendation 3: Applicability**

3.1 That ACOSS incorporates empowerment of clients as key decision makers in their own preparedness;
3.2 That ACOSS incorporates person-centred individual preparedness so that all organisations plan in relation to each individual’s resilience, capabilities and support needs;
3.3 That ACOSS incorporates approaches which involve clients and family members as critical resources in organisational preparedness and planning;
3.4 That ACOSS includes information about organisations managing the expectations of individuals with disability and their family or carers that may conflict with an organisation’s duty of care.
6. References


7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Facilitated discussion activity undertaken at ‘Emergency Preparedness Workshops’ in October 2016

Appendix 2 – Resilient Community Organisations Review Information
8. Project reports

This report forms one of a series of reports from this project:

- Report one: Knowledge base workshops in the LGAs: A report outlining the process and outcomes of the disability inclusive emergency preparedness workshops

- Report two: Disability and Disaster Risk Reduction / Emergency Preparedness: Scoping Review


You can access project reports by visiting our website at: http://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/cdrp/projects/disasterdisab.shtml, or contact the project team via email disability.disaster@sydney.edu.au or by telephone at +612 9351 9152.
Appendix 1 - Facilitated discussion activity undertaken at ‘Emergency Preparedness Workshops’ in October 2016

Facilitated discussion – Organisational preparedness for natural disasters

- It’s early Friday afternoon and you’re looking forward to the end of the working week as you’re about to start holidays and join the family on a camping weekend just up the road from home at Eric St, Bundeena.

- Your family is already at Bundeena Bonnie vale camping ground, and setup the camp site amongst other campers in the crowded camp ground.

- Just as you’re about to leave work you hear sirens blaring outside. Looking out the window you notice a very large smoke plume to the east of your current location that looks to be on the coastline.

- One of your work colleagues races past you in haste to leave and remarks “Haven’t you heard there’s a huge bushfire at Heathcote and they’re evacuating the areas”.

- Sure enough the radio just announces that the RFS are responding to a very large bushfire situation and have called in additional resources to assist. RFS ask residents to evacuate immediately where possible and advise nonresidents to stay out of the area to allow access for emergency response personnel.
• Your Facebook account is flooded with personal accounts from people reporting on the situation things are serious.

• You are considering where are your family? Are they safe? I can’t contact them! What about the families the organisation support?

1. In your group discuss and write on your butcher’s paper
   a) How do you think clients, their families and staff may be responding?
   b) Will you continue operating?
   c) How will you communicate messages?
   d) How will you be able to access copies of records, client contact details, insurance papers and organisation financial information remotely?

2. Followed by large group feedback

3. Now in your group discuss and write on butcher’s paper what you think would be necessary steps you would need to take so your organisation is prepared for this situation?
If you would like to help us by reviewing the ACOSS ‘Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit’, please put your details here:

Name: __________________________ Contact Number __________________________

Email address: ___________________________

Address: ___________________________

*Please note follow up of reviews will take place early in November*
Appendix 2 – Resilient Community Organisations Review Information

Preparing your organisation to respond to people with disability during natural disasters

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of the next phase of the Disability Inclusive Disaster Preparedness in NSW project. By reviewing the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit.

Why is this review important?

Many Community Service Organisations (CSOs) and Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), are wanting to engage in better preparedness for natural hazard emergencies. Understanding the organisation’s current level of preparedness is the first step to becoming better informed. This can now happen by using the self-assessment Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit developed by ACOSS.

For the purposes of our Disability Inclusive Disaster Preparedness Project, it is really important to know if this toolkit is practical and effective for organisations who support people with disability, and their families.

What is the ACOSS ‘Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit’?

ACOSS’ Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit is an online product to help organisations self-assess their resilience to disasters and emergencies. It includes:
• A Disaster Resilience Benchmarking Tool so organisations can assess their current state of disaster preparedness and identify areas of improvement.
• Six Steps to Disaster Resilience which include information and resources organisations need to take action;
• A Disaster Resilience Plan for Community Organisations Template

What you need to do to review the toolkit for our Disability Inclusive Disaster Preparedness in NSW Project

Review activity

We have seven reflective questions here for you to think about when you are working through the steps below to review the Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit. We have provided you with a Review Questions Document attached to this email for you to record your answers to each question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The process of completing the Toolkit was…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. By completing the toolkit, I learned…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The parts of the toolkit that I did not understand or felt did not apply to my organisation were…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Having completed the toolkit, I anticipate the following challenges for my organisation…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Having completed the toolkit, I think our organisation could improve our organisational preparedness by…

6. This toolkit supports our duty of care to staff: Yes or No? Please explain…

7. This toolkit supports our duty of care to the people and families we serve: Yes or NO? Please explain…

1. Review the Benchmarking tool

Please review your organisation’s emergency preparedness by completing the ACOSS benchmarking tool which is online at: http://resilience.acoss.org.au/benchmark

Once you complete this, the website provides you with a summary of your organisation’s preparedness for disasters, including your scores for each of the six steps.

*The results summary page has an option to have your summary emailed to you. There is also an option for you to agree to ACOSS contacting you in the future for feedback on use of the benchmarking tool (please note our project is not involved in ACOSS follow up).

2. Review the Six Steps to Disaster Resilience

Now review the Six Steps to Disaster Resilience these can be found at http://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps.

This section of the website has useful information and resources to assist your organisation's preparedness for disasters. If you have time to review the information on each of the steps that's great, if not focus on the two where your organisation is rated in the summary information as least prepared.

Review and if possible start completing the ‘Disaster Resilience Plan for Community Organisations Template’. This is another tool in the Toolkit which can be used as a process to help your organisation become better prepared. To make it easier we have attached this template to this email. Again, if you have time to review all the steps that’s great, if not focus on the two steps where your organisation is rated in the summary information as least prepared.

3. Telephone follow up

Hayley Brooks, Project Manager will call to talk with you about your review of the ACOSS toolkit. The conversation will be based on your answers in the Review
Questions Above that have been provided. Thanks again for taking part in this important project.

What will happen next?

Our project team is actively working with ACOSS to ensure their Toolkit is relevant across the sectors and that everyone knows it is available and ready for use. We will be working with ACOSS to refine their Toolkit if revisions are needed based on the feedback we get from you in this review process.

Who can I contact if I have a question about this review process?

If you have any questions about this process you can contact Hayley Brooks, Project Manager on 02 9351 9152/ 0426 450 236, or email hayley.brooks@sydney.edu.au.

*Please note Hayley's work days are Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

For more information visit:


or contact Hayley Brooks, Project Manager on
disability.disaster@sydney.edu.au or phone 02 9351 9152 / 0426 450 236

This project is a partnership led by the University of Sydney’s Centre for Disability Research and Policy and School of Ge
The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSW Government, unless the views expressed in the project materials have been publicly supported by the Government, or Government Agency.