



Getting back on your feet:
Community development work
and natural disasters

Publication Details

Getting back on your feet: Community development work and natural disasters

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Cover photo: Flooding in Fernvale taken by local resident, Lynette Lynch on January 11, 2011.

¹ The Queensland Centre for Social Science Innovation (QCSSI) was established by the Labor government on the 8th August 2011. The Centre was a collaboration with the Queensland Government and five Queensland universities to focus research on government priority areas. Support for the initiative was withdrawn by the Liberal National Party of Queensland following its appointment to power in March 2012.

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List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEMI	Australian Emergency Management Institute
APS	Australian Public Service
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CD	Community Development
CDEI	Community Development and Engagement Initiative
CDO	Community Development Officer
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRED	Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
DLGP	Department of Local Government and Planning
EAP	Employment Assistance Program
EMA	Emergency Management Australia
EMQ	Emergency Management Queensland
HFA	Hyogo Framework of Action
IDNDR	International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
LGA	Local Government Area
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
NDRRA	Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements
NDSR	National Strategy for Disaster Resilience
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSDR	National Strategy for Disaster Resilience
QRA	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
SPF	Strategic Policy Framework
TAFE	Training and Further Education
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

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1. Introduction and Structure of the Report

In Australia and internationally, responding to natural disasters is one of the great challenges of the new millennium. Community development (CD) has been espoused as one of the useful means of preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters², but the exact nature of the role of community development is not yet well articulated. By examining a specific community development program designed in response to the 2010-2011 Queensland natural disasters, this reports aims to better understand the role of community development workers and the tensions within this emerging body of work.

This project is a component of a larger Queensland Centre for Social Science Innovation (QCSSI) funded research endeavour called *Identifying and evaluating factors influencing community resilience in a crisis*. The focus of this particular component of the research³ is:

to examine the roles, responsibilities and efficacy of the newly funded state community development officers in building capacity for future resilience from subsequent disasters.

This report not only describes the research approach and findings, but also presents a very clear and detailed discussion of the policy context in which the community development officers are located. The report is structured in seven parts. Following this introduction, Section 2 explains the evolution of current approaches to disaster management. It begins by situating the work in a global disaster context, then exploring Australian disaster arrangements. Disaster management at the Queensland state government level is detailed, followed by acknowledgment of the active role of local government. Finally the specific policy and program arrangements put in place following the 2010-2011 Queensland flood and cyclone period, will be explained, to help understand why community development formed part of this response. Section 3 provides an orientation to community development. It both explains and problematises its use in disaster management responses. It also provides a description of its intended use within the disaster management arrangements of 2010-2011. Section 4 is a brief overview of the approach to the research. In Sections 5 and 6, the central findings are discussed, to answer the research question posed above, first through an appreciative lens, and then through a more critical analysis. Section 7 concludes the reports and provides a series of recommendations resulting from the analysis.

While this report is intended to provide a response to the research question posed in the QCSSI funded research project, it in no way does justice to the rich information shared by those engaged in the programs who so generously gave their time and shared their insights. A series of academic papers for publication are in development to explore specific aspects of this endeavor in greater detail, and to complement this report.

² The formal sociology of disaster management literature makes distinctions between terms including 'risk', 'hazard', 'threat', 'incident', 'accident', 'disaster', 'emergency', 'crisis' and 'catastrophe'. While acknowledging the importance of these distinctions at theoretical and planning levels, such precise definitions were not useful in the present field research. Reflecting their everyday use by research participants, these terms are used interchangeably in this report (see for example, Quarantelli, 1998; Quarantelli, Lagadec, and Boin, 2006).

³ A report on the complete research project is available from the chief investigator, Dr Peter Walters, at p.walters@uq.edu.au

2. The Disaster Management Policy Context

2.1 The global context: An increase in disasters globally

Academic, policy and popular discussion all give credence to an increase in the number, frequency, and intensity of natural disasters; with climate change a key driver (van Aalst, 2006; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2007a, 2007b; Parenti, 2011). The United Nations 2012 GEO-5 report observes that the number of flood and drought events classified as disasters has risen since the 1980s, as have the total area, the number of people affected and the level of damages. The report argues that,

The scale, spread and rate of change of global drivers are without precedent. Burgeoning populations and growing economies are pushing environmental systems to destabilizing limits (United Nations Environment Programme, 2012, p. 4).

Reports indicate that the number of natural disasters, economic losses, and number of people affected are increasing at a rapid rate, faster than risk reduction can be achieved (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), 2009). Over the past 20 years disasters have affected 4.4 billion people, caused \$2 trillion of damage and killed 1.3 million people (AusAID, 2013). In 2011 – the focal year of this research – 332 natural disasters were registered, which was actually less than the average annual disaster frequency observed from 2001 to 2010 (n=384) (Guha-Sapir, Vos, Below & Ponserre, 2011). However, the human and economic impacts of the disasters in 2011 were massive. Natural disasters killed a total of 30 773 people and caused 244.7 million victims worldwide. Economic damages from natural disasters were the highest ever registered, at an estimated US\$ 366.1 billion.

The international community has also recognised the importance of addressing this global challenge. During the 1990s the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters along with their associated economic, social and environmental impacts were perceived as a “major threat” to sustainable development (UNISDR, 2001). Calling for an urgent global response the United Nations launched the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR, 1990 – 1999) to raise awareness about the importance of disaster reduction (UNISDR, 2001).

At the conclusion of the Decade a conceptual shift had occurred taking the focus from “disaster response” to “disaster reduction”, as well as highlighting the role of human action in decreasing or increasing vulnerability to natural hazards (UNISDR, 2001). As a result of these findings the United Nations established the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) which developed a framework to “enable societies to become more resilient to the negative impact of natural hazards” by integrating “risk reduction into sustainable development” (UNISDR, 2001, pp. 420 & 439).

This framework evolved further in 2005 when the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Hyogo, Japan, adopted the present *Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* (Hyogo Framework). The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), to which Australia is a signatory, is the “first plan to explain, describe and detail the work that is required from all different sectors and actors to reduce disaster losses” to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters (UNISDR, n.d.).

The Hyogo Framework states as its key objective the substantial reduction of “disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries” (UNISDR, 2005, p.1) by adopting the following strategic goals,

- The integration of disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning.
- Development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build resilience to hazards.
- The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes (UNISDR, 2005, p.1).

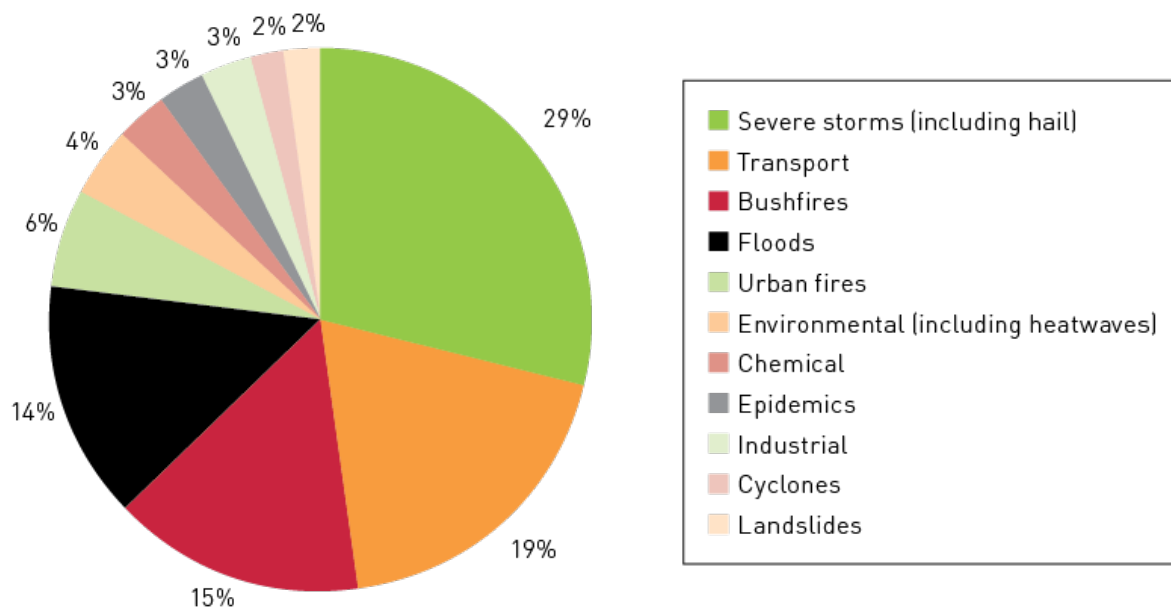
It is against this global backdrop that the present Australian research takes place.

2.2 The national context: Natural disasters in Australia

For Australians, natural disasters are a feature of life in a land where climatic conditions range from the tropical north regions with distinct wet and dry seasons, through the dry, desert expanses of the interior, to the temperate regions of the south (ABS, 2012). These climatic conditions often combine to create extreme weather conditions resulting in natural disasters such as bushfires, drought, floods and storms.

Over the years, natural disasters have caused significant devastation, loss of life, injuries, and community disruption. In financial terms, natural disasters already cost the Australian community an average of over \$1 billion per year excluding death and injury costs (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2007). Figure 1 provides the relative frequency of specific disasters in Australia from 2000–2009.

FIGURE 1: THE RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF SPECIFIC DISASTERS IN AUSTRALIA FROM 2000-2009



Source: Australian Emergency Management Institute, 2011.

The greater frequency of heat waves and severe storms, shifts in rainfall patterns and rising sea levels (IPCC, 2007a) has also lead to concerns about Australia’s vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. During the summer of 2010-2011 Australia experienced widespread flooding and other extreme weather events that caused significant and widespread losses. A recent report argued that, “More than 320 of Australia’s 559 local government areas were disaster declared as a result of flooding, storms, cyclones, and fires. Many areas affected by more than one disaster. The 2010–11 disasters were, in financial and economic terms, some of the largest in Australia’s history” (Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), 2012, p.53). In early 2012 and again in 2013, communities in a number of Australian states were again hit by flooding caused by heavy rainfall.

2.3 The policy context – Australian disaster management policy

The evolution of Australia’s natural disaster management arrangements from a post Second World War civil defence model to a national response that encompasses bushfires, cyclones, floods and earthquakes has been rapid (Graham, 2011; Pearce, 2007) and occurred at all levels of government. The role of governments in emergency management is defined under Australia’s constitutional arrangements, so that while state and territory governments take primary responsibility for community safety and for overseeing disaster management arrangements (Gabriel, 2002), federal and local governments are also active players.

The push to adopt a nation-wide response to disaster management was advanced by the Whitlam Government’s formation of the Natural Disasters Organisation in 1974, while the devastation wrought by Cyclone Tracy and the Brisbane floods highlighted the need for a more formalised approach to disaster management structures by the states (Gabriel, 2002; McNamara 2012). The subsequent restructuring process was progressed by the introduction of a comprehensive and integrated approach to emergency management, which had its origin in the US comprehensive emergency management⁴ model of the late 1970s (Cronstedt, 2002; Gabriel, 2002). These influences are still evident in contemporary Australian disaster management arrangements, which are defined as,

- **Comprehensive** – covering and managing the wide range of risks that may impact community safety. Applying to all elements of PPRR to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from an emergency; and
- **Integrated** – ensuring that disaster management responses are coordinated within and across all levels of government, relevant organisations and agencies, private sector and the community to support the PPRR framework (Attorney-General’s Department, 2009).

The move from the pre-existing response and relief disaster management framework to the application of a comprehensive approach was reinforced by the nationwide uptake of the PPRR model that shifted a single agency emergency-centric approach towards the inclusion of multiple players undertaking a wide range of emergency management services (Gabriel, 2002). While in-

⁴ Comprehensive emergency management (CEM) refers to a state’s responsibility and capability for managing all types of emergencies and disasters by coordinating the actions of numerous agencies. The ‘comprehensive’ aspect of CEM includes all four phases of disaster or emergency activity: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It applies to all risks: attack, human-made, and natural, in a federal-state-local partnership (National Governors’ Association, 1979).

depth analysis of PPRR is beyond the scope of this report, critics note that the promotion and practice of PPRR at state and local levels has not always been achievable on a comprehensive basis and the focus of PPRR often remains at the level of emergency events and activities as opposed to broader community contexts (Cronstedt, 2002; Gabriel 2002). Nevertheless, the “role and image” of disaster management has largely changed from “quasi-military authorities” assuming a command and control methodology over communities to one in which services work with community to identify risks and respond to emergencies (Gabriel, 2002, p. 297).

In 1995, another key stage in the evolution of disaster management policy occurred when risk management standards were developed by Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand⁵ (Cronstedt, 2002; Attorney-General’s Department (AGD), 2004). The risk management standard principles and processes were subsequently adopted by emergency management in Australia (AGD, 2004), along with many other organisations in Australia, as the basis for risk management activity (Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI), 2011). The risk management model broadened the focus from responding to hazards to including risk and was crucial in “providing a common conceptual framework and language for the emergency management sector to engage more widely across the economy and society. It was also flexible enough to cope with a wide range of contexts” (AEMI, 2011, p. 34). Adopting the standard’s principles and processes to emergency management guidelines not only endorsed the comprehensive and integrated approach (AGD, 2004) but also introduced into Australian disaster management arrangements risk management methodologies based on business-like management and outcome-based performance (Cronstedt, 2002). The evolution and reconceptualisation of Australian disaster management arrangements over the past 40 years is summarised in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: RECONCEPTUALISING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

FROM		TO
Hazards	→	Vulnerability
Reactive	→	Proactive
Single agencies	→	Partnerships
Science driven	→	Multi-disciplinary approach
Response management	→	Risk management
Planning for communities	→	Planning with communities
Communicating to communities	→	Communicating with communities

Source: Cronstedt, 2002.

Although the Federal government does not have the statutory authority to “direct” states and territories on emergency management issues (AEMI, 2011, p. 18) it does play a major role in assisting states to develop disaster management strategies. Emergency Management Australia (EMA) is the federal government agency that undertakes national policy development, research and training, as well as facilitating physical support when an emergency is beyond the capacity of state or territory resources (AGD, 2008). Additionally, the Australian Government provides financial

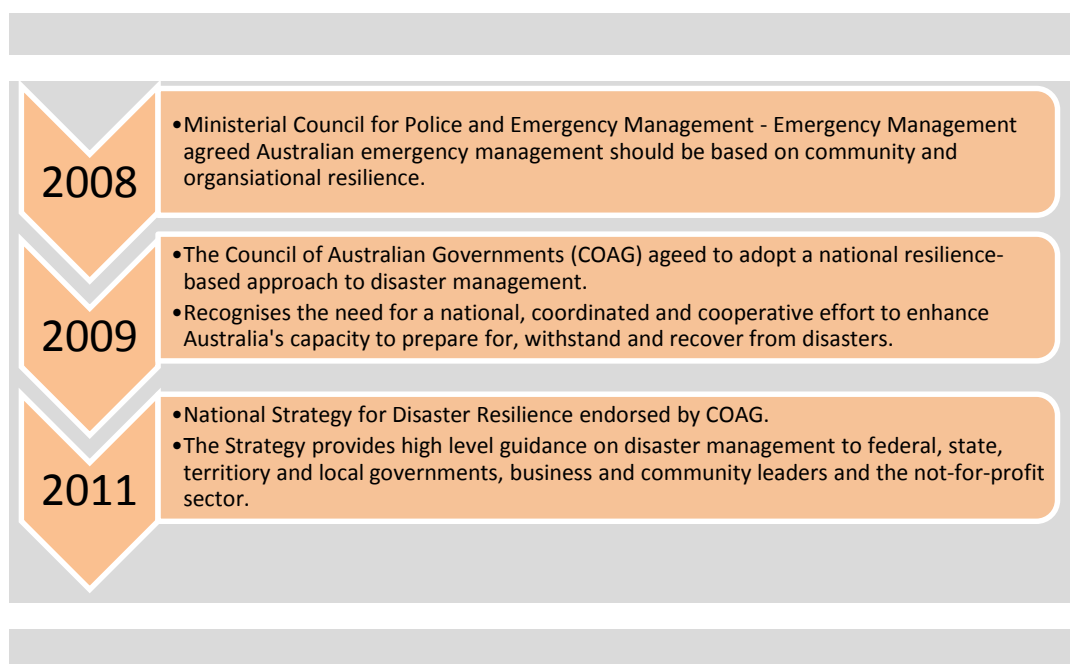
⁵ AS/NZS 4360:1995 *Risk management* (Standards Australia, 1995)

assistance to state and territory governments, primarily, through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) to fund disaster response and recovery costs.

The Federal Government has also identified a more contemporary role for itself in collaborating with all levels of government to strengthen communities' resilience to natural disasters and to "minimize the impact of them" (GFDRR, 2012, p. 53). This role brings Australian policy responses into close alignment with international disaster management development initiatives. A key influence in this area is the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction which adopted the present Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (Hyogo Framework), discussed in Section 2.1. The Australian government drew from the Hyogo Framework's objectives and strategic goals to develop and implement its own National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR). Thus in 2008 the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management – Emergency Management (MCPPEM-EM) agreed that the "future direction for Australian emergency management should be based on achieving community and organisational resilience" (COAG, 2011, p. iii).

This process was progressed in 2009 when the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to adopt a "whole-of-nation resilience-based approach to disaster management" (COAG, 2011, p. iii). This approach recognised a "national, coordinated and cooperative effort is needed to enhance Australia's capacity to withstand and recover from emergencies and disasters" (COAG, 2011, p. iii). The endorsement of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience by COAG in 2011 marked another significant policy shift from a traditional reactive, command and control model of emergency management to one that promoted a more pro-active, bottom-up approach to disaster preparedness and recovery (Goode et al, 2011). Figure 3 captures the key shifts in policy change over the last five years.

FIGURE 3: MILESTONES IN AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER RESILIENCE



The policy shift signalled by the NSDR is clearly articulated throughout the Strategy's literature which describes application of a resilience-based approach as,

Not solely the domain of emergency management agencies; rather, it is a shared responsibility between governments, communities, businesses and individuals; and

Fundamental to the concept of disaster resilience, is that individuals and communities should be more self-reliant and prepared to take responsibility for the risks they live with (COAG, 2011, p. 10).

The Strategy also notes the "critical part all [Australians] play in developing their own disaster resilience and that of their communities" (COAG, 2011, p. iii) and observes the shift to disaster resilience will require "long term attitudinal" and "behavioural change" (AGD, 2011a; COAG, 2011; AGD, 2012). That the success of the Strategy relies heavily on achieving "nationwide behavioural change" (AGD, 2012, p. 3) poses a challenge for governments endeavouring to change disaster management policy initially predicated on an emergency response approach. According to the *Australia National Progress Report on the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2009-2011)* advancing a culture of self-reliance requires,

A fundamental shift from a community dependent on government services to a community that more closely participates in emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery and is, to some degree, self-reliant (AGD, 2011a, p. 47).

The NSDR applies a similar argument to achieving a more sustainable approach to emergency management calling on the Australian community to "reframe its thinking" from a "response and recovery" approach to "preparation and mitigation" (AGD, 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, the NSDR notes that relying on "increasing government intervention is unsustainable and may actually undermine community resilience" (AGD, 2012, p. 1). This approach is further reinforced in the publication *EM News* which advises "While governments will need to continue to provide leadership and support for a wide range of initiatives, communities and individuals will need to take on greater responsibility for their own disaster planning, preparation and response capabilities" (EM News, 2012, p. 3).

In addition to fostering resilience, the Strategy also attempts to moderate the demanding, under-resourced and often uncertain operating environment of emergency management (AGD, 2011a). Here government concerns about the increasing economic impacts of natural disasters align with recent measures targeted at reducing the impact of disasters through prevention and preparedness measures instead of relying on post-disaster recovery as a primary response (AGD, 2011a).

From a broader policy perspective it is important to note that the changing direction of Australian disaster management from response to preparedness also has parallels with emerging international approaches to crime prevention and public health referred to as the "community safety paradigm" or "community safety approach" (Elsworth et al, 2009, p. 17). Like the NSDR, defining characteristics of the community safety paradigm include the themes of shared responsibility, identifying and protecting those at risk, securing sustainable reductions in the source of the danger, the development of community-based programs and multi-agency partnerships (Elsworth et al, 2009).

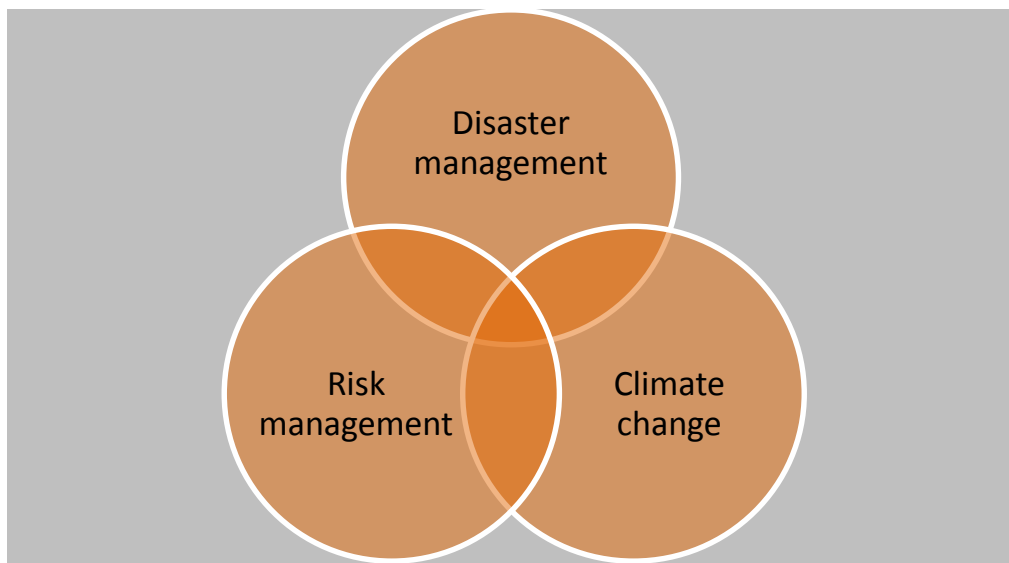
Additionally, as other government arenas integrated principles of risk management, resilience, self-reliance and sustainability into their own policy responses they also exerted further influence over

the disaster management arena. For instance, the Australian Government’s National Security Framework was brought into alignment with all hazards approach to disaster management through the inclusion of hazards such as climate change, biosecurity, natural disasters and the economy, as well as traditional elements of defence and intelligence (AEMI, 2011). While government responsibility for environment related policies and plans, including adaptation to climate change, generally falls to the states and territories, natural disaster management has been identified as a whole-of-government response to climate change adaption involving building community resilience (AGD, 2011a).

The National Climate Change Adaption Framework adopted by all Australian governments in 2007 aimed to reduce the risks of climate change and to “support decision-makers understand and incorporate climate change into policy and operational decisions at all scales and across all vulnerable sectors” (Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, 2007, p. 3). For the emergency management sector this meant incorporating the increased risk of natural disasters as a result of climate change into policy and adapting emergency planning and management strategies to mitigate the impacts of weather-related events (Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ), 2009).

The integration of international disaster management responses with broader public policy trends has generated Australian disaster arrangements that are both layered and contextual (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: CONVERGING PUBLIC POLICIES INFORMING DISASTER MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS



While early disaster arrangements adopted an emergency-centric response with an internal agency focus, the application of risk management strategies – along with the push to create a more disaster resilient Australia – has broadened the gaze of disaster management towards a comprehensive and integrated approach. Today, disaster management policy and practice seeks to create a shared understanding of a more disaster resilient Australia as one that would recognise “current and future risk, reduce and manage those risks, and be better able to adapt to change and recover from disasters” (AEMI, 2009, p. 1).

2.4 Queensland disaster management arrangements

The year of 1974 proved to be significant both in terms of Australian natural disasters and for exposing shortcomings in disaster management responses at the level of federal and state government. The year 1974 is well known in Australian history for the devastating impact of Cyclone Tracy in the Northern Territory (National Archives of Australia, 2013). It brought unprecedented rainfall saturating vast areas of the continent, and catastrophic floods also struck Brisbane in the wake of Cyclone Wanda.

For the state of Queensland, which had no formal disaster management arrangements or structures in place, these events signalled the need for more effective disaster management planning (Queensland Government, 2013b). By the mid-1970s, the departure from a Civil Defence response that had little capacity to respond to natural disasters saw all Australian states and territories develop legislation and disaster management structures which emphasised managing the “community consequence” associated with disasters (Queensland Government, 2013b).

While all layers of Australian government participate in Australia’s national framework for disaster management the primary responsibility for emergency management falls to the states and territories. The national adoption of a comprehensive and integrated approach to disaster management formed the legislative basis for Queensland disaster management arrangements under the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (Department of Community Safety, 2011). The Act also established disaster management governance arrangements including delegating responsibility to local governments to manage disaster events in their local government area (Department of Community Safety, 2011).

A review of disaster management legislation and policy resulted in changes to the Disaster Management Act in 2010 as articulated through Queensland’s Disaster Management Strategic Policy Framework (SPF) (Department of Community Safety, 2011). Importantly, and from a broader public policy perspective, the SPF aligns “disaster risk reduction, disaster mitigation, disaster resilience and climate change adaption policy and actions with international and national reforms” (Department of Community Safety, 2011, p. 15). From a disaster management perspective the SPF aims to strengthen Queensland’s “disaster preparedness, resilience and capacity to implement coordinated initiatives to reduce the impact of disasters” (Department of Community Safety, 2010, p. 2).

Foremost to disaster management policy and operational arrangements in Queensland is the NSDR that advances key disaster management messages through the SPF to achieve safer, better prepared and more resilient communities. Thus the SPF promotes,

- Community resilience and economic sustainability through disaster risk reduction; and
- Prepared, resilient communities that understand their role in disaster management arrangements (Department of Community Safety, 2010, p. 4).

Here too the disaster management is seen to involve “engaging with those who contribute to risk and those who are responsible for mitigating risk, preparing communities to respond, responding to events and engaging those supporting the recovery from disasters” (Department of Community Safety, 2010).

One of the guiding principles of the Act is to take the “appropriate measures to recover from an event, including action taken to support disaster-affected communities in the reconstruction of infrastructure, the restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing, and the restoration of the environment” (Disaster Management Act, 2003, p.13).

Emergency Management Queensland identifies five main principles underpinning the Queensland disaster management system that support and build on the comprehensive and integrated approach as adopted by the Australian Emergency Management Arrangements (Department of Community Safety, 2011). These are,

- A comprehensive approach, which ensures a balance between the reduction of risk and the enhancement of community resilience whilst ensuring effective response and recovery capabilities.
- An all hazards approach, which assumes that the functions, activities, planning and responses applicable to one hazard are most likely applicable to a range of hazards.
- An all agencies approach, which recognises that no single agency can prepare for and deal with the disruption to community life and infrastructure that can result from a disaster.
- Local disaster management capability (see Section 2.5).
- A prepared, resilient community, which involves all individuals taking a share of the responsibility. A high level of resilience will reduce vulnerability and reliance on response agencies (Department of Community Safety, 2011).

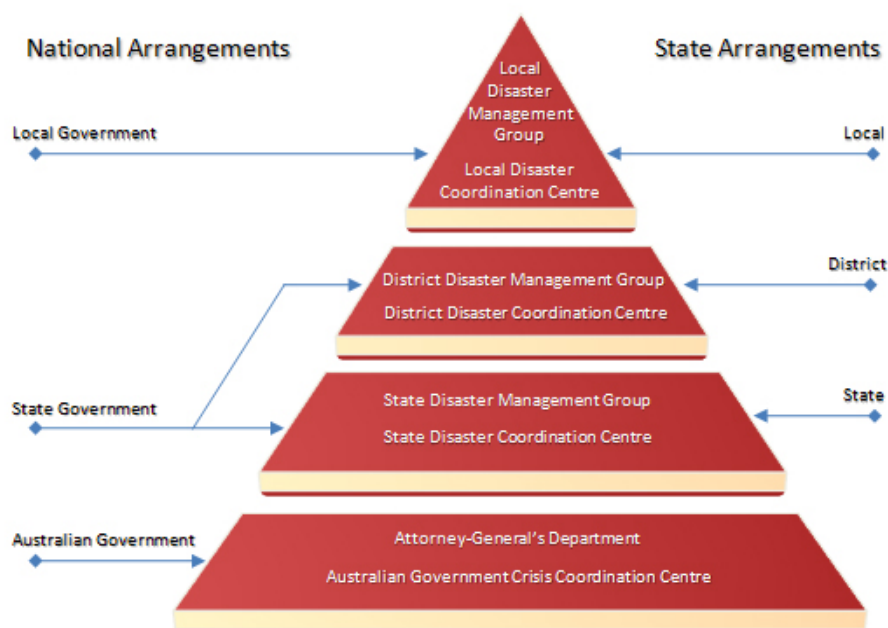
Thus Queensland disaster arrangements are espoused as taking a collaborative and coordinated response to PPRR across all levels of governments, and the private and NGO sectors, with responsibilities to be shared by individuals, families and communities (State Disaster Management Group, 2011). Of significance here and where this report turns to next, is the collaborative relationship Queensland has with local governments to ensure the “effective coordination of planning, services, information, and resources necessary for comprehensive disaster management” (Department of Community Safety, 2011, p. 18).

2.5 Local government disaster management arrangements

Queensland disaster management arrangements take a whole-of-government approach that works in partnership between the state and local governments to achieve a collaborative, coordinated response to disaster management (Department of Community Safety, 2011). This facilitates disaster management arrangements that are based on a “graduated” response to a disaster starting at the local level that escalates up through district, state and federal levels depending on the severity of the event (AEMI, 2011)(see Figure 5).

Thus local governments are the “frontline of disaster management” taking primary responsibility for managing disaster events in local government areas (Department of Community Safety, 2011, p. 40). This is supported by the Disaster Management Act 2003, which covers “council’s responsibilities for the establishment and support of Local Disaster Management Groups to plan for and prepare the local system and community for disaster events” (QRA, 2011c, p.12).

FIGURE 5: QUEENSLAND'S DISASTER MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS



Source: http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/About_Disaster_Management/DM_arrangments.html

2.6 The local context – Queensland flooding events 2010-2011

Between November 2010 and February 2011, the state of Queensland was particularly hard hit by extreme weather events. The unusually heavy rainfall experienced in the latter half of 2010 and early 2011 which caused widespread flooding throughout northern, central and eastern Australia, also brought an end to the drought affecting large areas of eastern Australia for much of the preceding decade (ABS, 2012). Monsoonal rainfall over a prolonged period combined with already saturated catchments and a series of tropical cyclones caused extensive flooding across Queensland resulting in more than 99% of Queensland being disaster-declared (Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA)(2011a); ABS, 2012).

Flood and cyclone-related disasters resulted in the loss of thirty-seven lives⁶ (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2011; QRA, 2011a; ABS, 2012). The Queensland Floods Commission of Enquiry (2012) reported that during the 2010-2011 floods over 2.5 million people⁷ were affected and some 29,000 homes and businesses suffered some form of inundation. Nearly 7000 people were accommodated in 74 evacuation centres across the state, and over 45,000 properties were affected in some way (QRA, 2011b). The Queensland Reconstruction Authority has estimated the reconstruction cost to be in excess of \$5 billion (QRA, 2011b).

⁶ This figure is difficult to confirm. The QRA (2011a), the Department of Premier and Cabinet (2011) and ABS (2012), declare 37 people died. The Floods Commission Interim Report (2011) listed a figure of 35 deaths, with The Floods Commission Final Report (2012) giving a figure of 33 deaths.

⁷ Queensland's estimated population as of March 2011 was 4,561,700 persons (ABS, 2011).

The environment within which the Community Development Engagement Initiative (CDEI) (see section 2.7) itself was developed and implemented was both unique and complex. The devastation brought about by the 2010-2011 summer natural disasters was unprecedented⁸ creating a sense of urgency that was exacerbated by the political climate of the time. At the inception of the CDEI in April 2011, Queensland was led by an increasingly unpopular Labor government who ultimately went onto suffer a landslide defeat to the conservative LNP party in the March 2012 election. The performance of the Premier, Anna Bligh, in managing the natural disasters and the media attention that this generated provided a much needed boost to her popularity. Certainly, the highly demanding political environment and the urgency surrounding Queensland's disaster recovery efforts ensured the CDEI was under pressure from the outset to get the community development officers (CDOs) on the ground and to be seen to deliver tangible results. Additionally, there was government pressure on the CDEI to succeed as a program. This was the first NDRRA Category C – Community Recovery Fund community development program in Queensland (see below for the discussion on this point) and as such it was set to navigate uncharted community development terrain both in terms of working with post-disaster communities and because the CDO role came attached with community recovery funding.

In line with Queensland's *Disaster Management Act 2003*, during the events of 2010-2011, disaster arrangements were activated at the local government level, however the scale and severity of the natural disasters meant that arrangements had to be quickly escalated through district, state and federal levels. The next section shows how these arrangements unfolded, and how community development came to be a central part of these arrangements.

2.7 Community Development Engagement Initiative (CDEI)

Between November 2010 and March 2011, the Commonwealth and State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements⁹ (NDRRA) were activated in 72 of Queensland's 73 local government areas (QRA, 2011a). Figure 6 provides an overview of Queensland Government plans and packages designed to provide a governance and funding structure to Queensland's reconstruction and recovery following these events.

In February 2011, the Queensland Government established the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) to assist Queensland's reconstruction effort. The QRA developed a reconstruction roadmap known as Operation Queensland (or the State Plan) that nominated six lines of Reconstruction: Human and Social; Economic; Environment; Building Recovery; Roads and Transport; and Community Liaison and Communication (QRA, 2011a; QRA, 2011b).

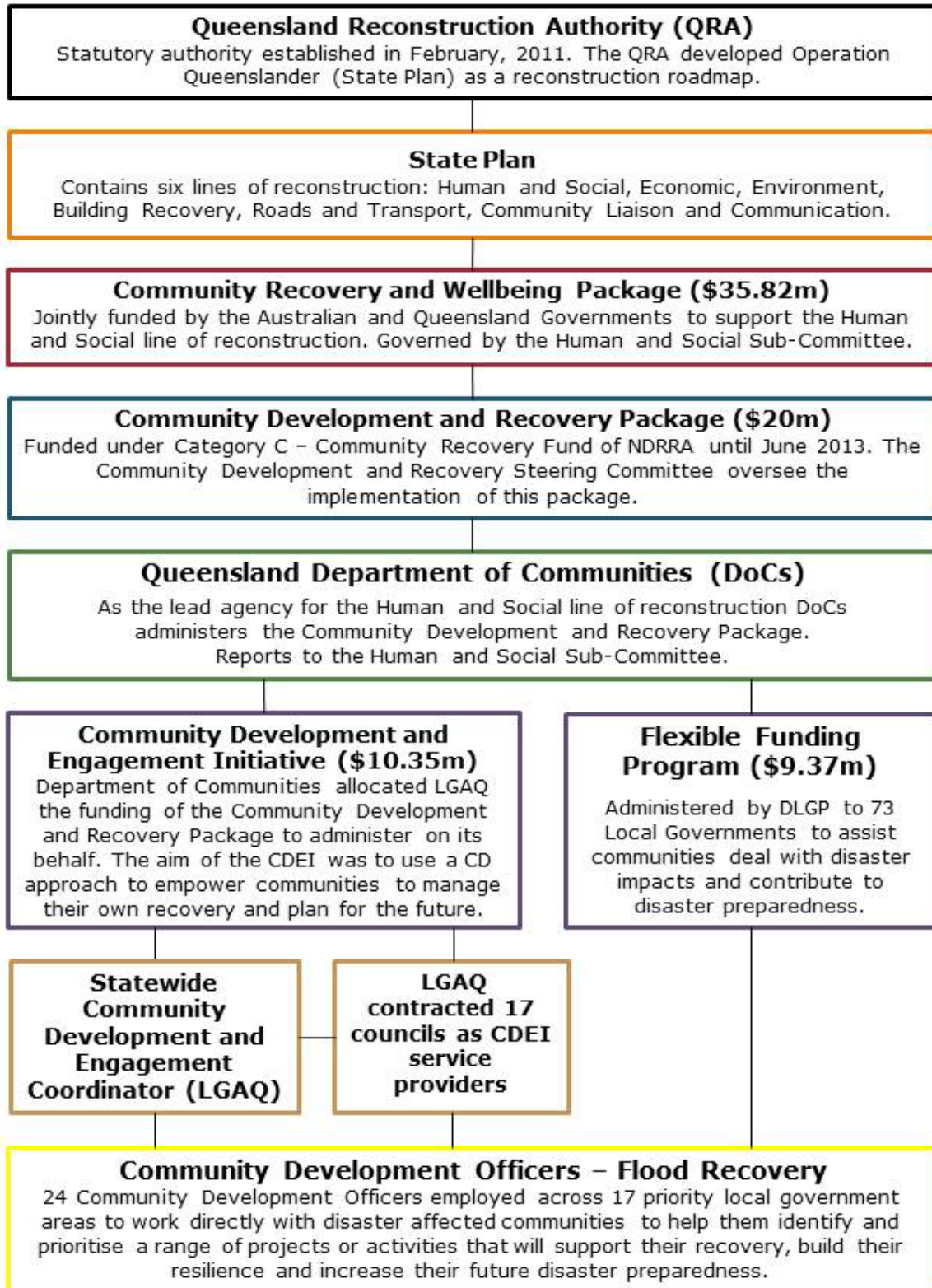
In April of 2011, the Community Recovery and Wellbeing Package (\$35.82m) was announced to support the Human and Social line of reconstruction (Department of Communities, 2011b) designed to "restore and strengthen local human services and community capacity, through provision of direct assistance to individuals and communities, and supporting communities to drive and participate in their own recovery" (QRA, 2011a, p. 30). The Package was jointly funded by the

⁸ Historical records show that the events themselves were not unprecedented, but the number of people affected and economic devastation were not previously experienced.

⁹ The NDRRA are based on a cost sharing formula between the Australian and state or territory government which is dependent upon the size and severity of the disaster (Queensland Government, 2013a).

Australian Federal (75%) and Queensland State (25%) Governments under the NDRRA (Department of Communities, 2011a; QRA, 2011a).

FIGURE 6: QUEENSLAND'S RESPONSE TO THE 2010-2011 DISASTER



A key component of this package was the Community Development and Recovery Package that provided \$20m in targeted funding for two years ending June 2013. This was funded under Category C – Community Recovery Fund¹⁰ of the NDRRA to assist with the “implementation of a community development approach to the reconstruction and recovery of Queensland” (Department of Communities, 2011c, p. 1) and was overseen by the Community Development and Recovery Steering Committee. The Package was also designed to “support Local Governments to ensure they are able to effectively plan for the long-term sustainability of their communities and assist communities to prepare for and build resilience to recover from future disaster events” (Department of Communities, 2011b, p.2).

The Community Development and Recovery funding consisted of three components:

- Community Development and Engagement Initiative (CDEI) – provided \$10.45m of funding to 17 disaster affected Local Government Areas (LGAs) for 24 Community Development Officers (with brokerage funds) to be administered by Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ).
- Targeted funding to LGAQ – engaged a Statewide Community Development and Engagement Coordinator to administer the funding and overall management of the CDEI program.
- Flexible Funding Program – provided \$9.37m to the Department of Local Government and Planning to administer grants to 73 LGAs (allocated on a prioritised and tiered basis) to implement community recovery projects to help local communities deal with the impacts of the disasters and to contribute to their disaster preparedness (Department of Communities, 2011a, 2011b).

The CDEI component of the Package is the focus of this report and is significant for the fact that it was the first time that the Category C – Community Recovery Fund measure had been applied in Queensland to support a broad based community development program (LGAQ personal communication, April 16, 2013).

The CDEI advanced a specific disaster management response incorporating a community development approach within a broader policy context encompassing social, political, economic and environmental policy arenas. The CDEI “aims to support the recovery and well-being of community members through a community development approach which empowers them to manage their own recovery and plan for the future” (Department of Communities, 2011d, p. 1). What constitutes community development, the role of community development in disaster management, and how these conceptual understandings manifested in practice is the subject of the remainder of this report.

¹⁰ A community recovery fund is provided in circumstances where a community is “severely affected and needs to restore social networks, community functioning and community facilities. Expenditure from the fund is aimed at community recovery, community development and community capacity building, and is administered by the *state* government in close collaboration with local government bodies or other community bodies” (Attorney General’s Department, 2011b).

3. Community Development

As this report has demonstrated thus far, the integration of community development as a field of practice into disaster management and response is occurring globally. So much so that Jim Ife argues that we need to consider a whole new dimension of community development that he calls “survival development”, namely community development that takes place around major issues of human survival (2012).

3.1 Defining community development or not?

The challenge of defining community development in this new context is that the concept of community development is in itself “as varied in definition as those who profess to practice it” (Denise & Harris, cited Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 6). However, despite the diversity of definitions some argue an agreed definition is required. The problem with such a definitional approach is that it undermines the *principle of diversity* and also cuts across the empirical realities of diverse traditions and frameworks of community development at play within both theory and practice.

The extreme alternative to a definitional approach is a deconstructive approach, which suggests that no one can lay claim to what community development is (see for example, Brent 2009). The lens through which community development is viewed is simply one of seeing what is occurring on its own terms. Through this lens what community development means is dependent upon people’s language and practice. The problem with this approach is that the failure to define the term leaves the field of community development “unfenced”, causing it to be a very inclusive field. This runs the danger of every “socially approved occupation” being called community development (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 9).

An alternative approach, enabling some “fencing” of community development while still acknowledging difference and context is to highlight the diverse traditions and frameworks of community development at work within the field of practice. So rather than arguing for a particular definition, this third approach argues that different practitioners will draw on different traditions or frameworks¹¹. Each tradition has its own definition based on a particular perspective and history. Thus the tradition or framework provides focus and reference points for reflective community development practitioners, but the reference points are not provided by a tight hegemonic definition (see Westoby & Dowling, 2013; Westoby & Shevellar, 2012).

What is important to note here is that the CDEI appears to take, without stating it, a largely deconstructive approach. Nowhere is community development succinctly defined, although a range of related processes are defined and explained within the Community Development and Recovery

¹¹ Taking this tradition and framework approach rather than a definitional or purely deconstructive approach allows community development to be fenced by diverse norms and customs that are situated within diverse cultural, literary or historical traditions. These norms and customs of practice do not claim to determine what community development is but rather to describe a *particular tradition* of community development. Traditions could include: social mobilizing, social learning and social guidance communitarian, anarchist, Freirean, Alinskian or the Settlement House tradition (see Campfrens 1997 for an excellent discussion of these). Examples of frameworks would be: assets based community development, sustainable livelihood, critical community development, a networking approach, ‘rights from below’, dialogical community development, human-scale development, and so forth. Again this is not to deny orthodoxies, but to simply argue that orthodoxies much be understood historically, culturally and contextually.

Resource Kit, including recovery, community mapping and community engagement (LGAQ, 2011b). Instead, the Resource Kit suggests that community development encompasses a “continuum of activities and functions” ranging from “hands-on practical support” to community members, groups and organisations through to “strategic processes” to ensure long term and sustainable change (p. 9). Further, CDOs are advised that “There is no right or wrong approach” and much depends upon the context of the community, the council and other service providers, as well as the skill sets of the CDOs themselves (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 9). It does however acknowledge a “strengths based” approach to the work (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 10).

Within this research project we have adopted a similar approach, trying to hold both (i) a reading of what CDOs did through a lens of frameworks and traditions, but also (ii) a reading of what they did, explained on their own terms.

3.2 Community development roles in a post-disaster context

To inform our understanding of community development roles in a post-disaster context we review three Australian perspectives of the role of community development in the recovery effort through Emergency Management Australia, the 2010-2011 flood events in Queensland and the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

For an overview of the roles and responsibilities that can be assumed by community development workers in a disaster recovery context we turn first to an Emergency Management Australia (EMA) document titled *Community Development in Recovery from Disaster* (AGD, 2003). This work provides case studies of the implementation of community development in the context of natural disasters (the East Gippsland Floods in 1988, and the Blue Mountain Bushfires of 2002). The resulting EMA guidelines advise that while community development may need to take a more “reactive” approach in a disaster context it should aim to “identify, assess and plan to meet the needs of the affected community” (AGD, 2003, p. 12). According to the guidelines this process assigns the community development worker a facilitative role which includes community consultation, prioritisation of community needs, provision of services, providing and sharing information with and between stakeholders, community participation, self-determination and the use of community networks and local services (AGD, 2003).

The second perspective on the role of community development in disaster contexts is provided by Caniglia and Trotman’s report *A Silver Lining: Community Development, Crisis and Belonging* (2011). Their work explores the relationship between community development and crisis recovery in the context of the Queensland’s 2010-2011 flood events. While not specifically covering the roles of community development workers per se, the report highlights the role of community development in disaster recovery as one that facilitates community building and participation in order to foster social capital. Here Caniglia and Trotman (2011) connect participation to “themes of mutuality and roles where there is an exchange of resources, capacities and opportunities” (p. 20) and note that “participation through a range of different roles is part of community building” (p. 20) and should include the involvement of local people.

Acknowledging that community development is a practice of social inclusion the authors found the wellbeing of “isolated and disadvantaged residents” was a consistently raised concern in their research, as well as in community development and recovery literature (Caniglia & Trotman, 2011, p.

7). Thus Caniglia and Trotman note the importance of community development roles in supporting existing and new local governance structures such as resident groups, community planning teams and local area advisory committees to build and maintain community capacity. To this Caniglia and Trotman add the need to engage with “processes of legitimisation where these structures are endorsed by government (political and administrative arms) and the wider community” (Caniglia & Trotman, 2011, p. 40). Community development is identified as having a “significant role” in contributing to disaster recovery at the local level with responses including nurturing leadership capacity; undertaking needs assessments for recovery planning; facilitating and enabling activities that reflect the unique strengths of people, the infrastructure, culture and history of place; using contacts and networks to implement and promote community recovery activities; fostering strategic responses and building structural capacity. Significantly, a community development approach is recommended in relation to ongoing recovery that would be “strengthened and hastened by continuing to harness community based relationships in identifying needs and implementing solutions” (Caniglia & Trotman, 2011, p. 12). Finally, the report considers community development not through the lens of a bottom-up versus top-down dichotomy but rather as an organic process that exists and operates within broader governance systems that “come together to achieve effective and sustainable results”(Caniglia & Trotman, 2011, p. 7).

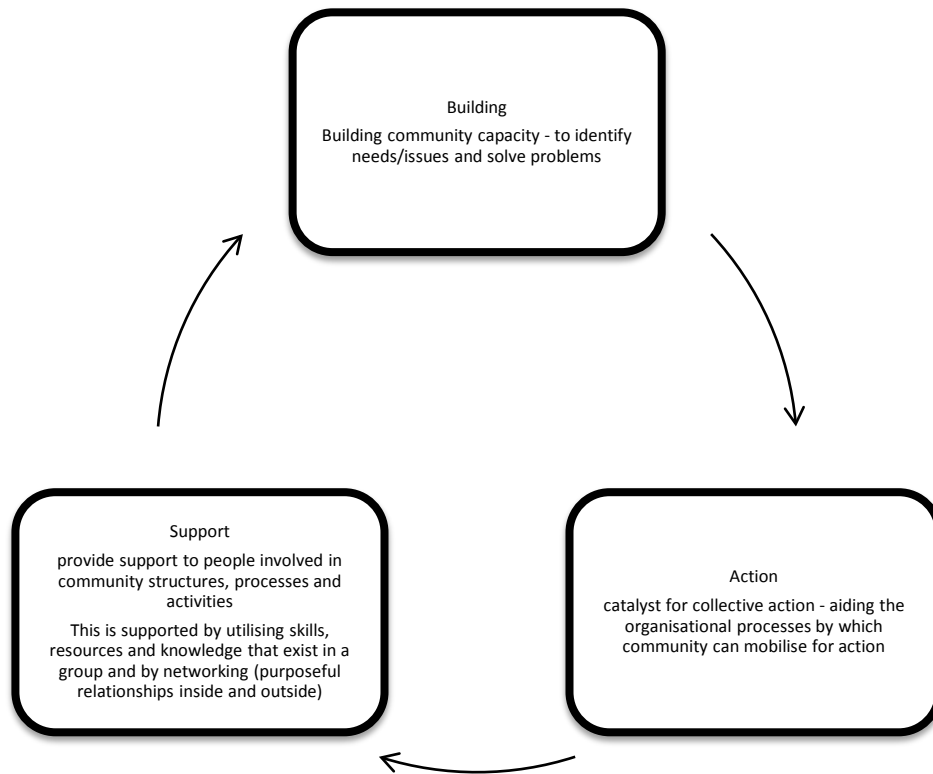
The third perspective emerges through research conducted by Webber and Jones (2012) into the roles and responsibilities of 18 community development workers employed as a response to the 2009 Victorian bushfires. It demonstrates the “unstructured and flexible” nature of community development work (Tesoriero, 2010). Adopting Toomey’s (2009) framework of eight traditional and alternative community development roles, Webber and Jones analyse the work and roles of the three Bushfire Community Recovery teams attached to the community development recovery program that ran from 2009-2011. The research concludes that because there was no collective definition or shared understanding of community development, workers were left to interpret their roles in response to community needs. Additionally, the research found that while workers primarily adopted the roles of provider, facilitator, ally and advocate, they also needed to adapt or change these roles in response to changing conditions and needs as identified by community.

This meant that in the early stages of recovery, workers found they often needed to be providers, supplying practical assistance, equipment and material goods, as well as holding informal conversations to understand individual and community needs. Toward the end of the first year workers took on a more facilitative role bringing communities and other organisations together around projects and providing organisational expertise. Here the role of facilitator was found to overlap with that of ally as a means to actively involve residents in re-building their community and generating social capital. Given that a key aim of the recovery project was to “ensure that something sustainable was left behind” (Webber & Jones, 2013, p. 259) the role of advocate was interpreted by the researchers as one that built community capacity and sustainability.

While the fluidity of community development workers’ roles is not unexpected given the uncertain space and changing landscape of community development work, there are limitations to understanding community development roles when we define, categorise and analyse roles according to pre-existing frameworks. In order to explore the key concepts and shared understandings attached to community development roles both in and out of a disaster recovery space we took the theoretical frameworks of Tesoriero (2010), Gilchrist and Taylor (2011), Toomey

(2009), Webber and Jones (2013), Caniglia and Trotman (2011) and the Community Development Alliance of Scotland (cited in Caniglia and Trotman, 2011, p. 16), and employed thematic analysis to look for patterns of both convergent and divergent ideas. Figure 7 summarises the processes of community development work discussed in this body of literature.

FIGURE 7: THE PROCESSES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK



As shown in Figure 7, what the literature suggests is that in disaster recovery community development is a process that can,

- Bring people to work together.
- Assist people to identify shared issues and needs and respond to them.
- Help people to discover the resources they already have.
- Promote knowledge, skills, confidence and the capacity to act together.
- Strengthen organisation and leadership within communities.
- Strengthen contacts between communities.
- Help to achieve the capacity to address local issues and engage with government and businesses in strategies that make a positive difference.

When people are working together they can,

- Take action to address inequalities in power and participation.
- Change relationships between communities and public or private organisations.
- Help public organisations to work in more open and inclusive ways.
- Promote increased local democracy, participation and involvement in public affairs.

The role of community development in disaster recovery can include,

- Assisting local people to learn about community issues; this knowledge builds understanding and a capacity to respond in the future.
- The capacity to harness community based relationships in identifying needs and implementing solutions.
- The capacity of local people to provide their own services is extended as is the involvement of local people.
- Using community building methods including local knowledge and outsider perspectives.
- Strengthening a sense of belonging to a particular place through maintaining and promoting community linkages.
- Building collective resilience.

The next section of the report will briefly describe our approach to the research, before then turning to how CDOs in the Queensland context understood their role.

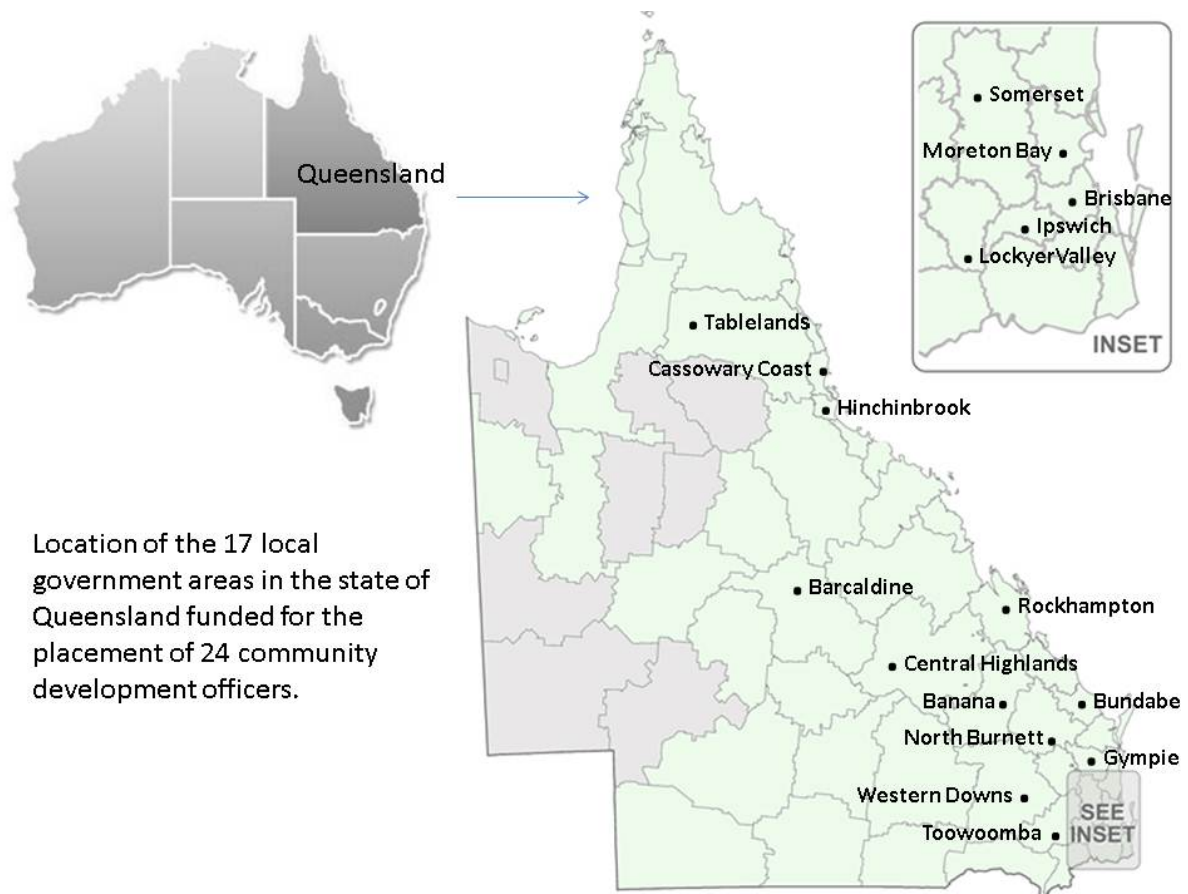
4. Methodology

To understand how CDOs understood their roles and responsibilities, this research employed a mixture of participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Participant observation occurred during four regional forums across Queensland: in Moreton Bay, Lockyer Valley, the Tablelands and North Burnett. In addition to providing a space for introducing CDOs to our research project and recruiting participants, observation at these forums helped the researchers deepen their understandings of the CDEI and its employment of community development processes and thinking.

Of the 24 CDOs, 19 agreed to be interviewed. The majority of the interviews occurred between July and November, 2012 (approximately one year after the roles commenced) at a time and place of convenience to the participants. Most interviews were transcribed and analysed for recurring themes in the data. As can be seen in Figure 8, interviews with CDOs occurred across 17 different regions of Queensland. Nine stakeholders were also interviewed to provide a broader policy and practice context for the work. These stakeholders included line managers, state government representatives and professionals in the disaster management field. Documents from the Queensland State Government and from the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) provided additional history and context.

FIGURE 8: LOCATION OF CDOs PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH



4.1 About the CDOs

Although LGAQ was tasked with administering the CDEI, the CDO recruitment process was undertaken by council personnel from the 17 severely flood affected local government areas. Of the 19 CDOs our research team interviewed, ten had previously held local government positions or were incumbent council employees. Nine of the CDOs had disaster related recovery experience that varied from administrative tasks to recovery coordination. Previous recovery experience mostly related to the 2010-2011 flood events which served, in a number of instances, as a pathway into the CDO role. A number of CDOs were personally affected by the 2010-2011 flood events.

In terms of qualifications, ten CDOs came to the role with academic qualifications, however, only one CDO was formally qualified as a community development practitioner (Diploma of Community Development (TAFE)) with one CDO gaining a Diploma in Community Development (TAFE) as part of a council team after commencing the role. Over half (12) of the CDOs identified that they had no previous community development experience, although some felt that their experience in the community sector gave them an understanding of a community development approach. Previous roles held by the CDOs were also diverse and included employment as a prison officer, a game ranger, and a journalist, as well as work experience in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors.

The CDOs worked in diverse contexts (different localities and councils) with each location demonstrating differences in cultures, socio-economics, income structures, age groups, values and service provision levels. The majority of the CDOs commenced their employment in August and September, 2011, some 6-7 months after the occurrence of the natural disasters, with the last CDO starting in November, 2011.

4.2 About the findings

In exploring *how the roles, responsibilities and efficacy of the newly funded state community development officers build capacity for future resilience from subsequent disasters*, as researchers we found ourselves in two very different conversations. The first conversation was a highly appreciative one, reflecting the strengths based intention and potential of the program. In the section that follows we report on what CDOs did and how they saw their work. We speak to the highly constructive and creative nature of the work conducted by the CDOs in this program. We connect these initial findings on the CDO role in disaster management emerging in current literature.

The second conversation requires a more complex, nuanced and critical stance and leads to the unhappy conclusion that ... *community development officers build capacity for future resilience "with great difficulty"*. It is here that we will spend more time. In Section 6 we detail the dilemmas for workers and explore how they manifest. We argue that both conversations are important. However we also argue that it is exploration of this level of complexity, and acknowledgement of the power relations operating both within and through this community development program, that distinguishes these findings from previous reports on the CDO role in disaster management, moves beyond an interpretive stance and can make an important contribution to the community development field.

5. An Appreciative Conversation

While community development is often undertaken in diverging environments its role and practice in a post-disaster context is a relatively new and unexplored field that can create particular tensions and challenges (Ife, 2013). For instance, the stakeholders are different (e.g. emergency personnel and disaster management personnel embedded within local government). As infrastructure is being rebuilt community workers find themselves engaging with engineers and a broader range of council programs (e.g. environment teams). The context is different. Community workers enter when people are raw and in grief and experiencing loss. While this may be true of other communities (e.g. refugee communities) the difference is that the impact is across the whole population (e.g. elders, migrants, farmers, families, schools).

Community development encompasses multiple roles that are changeable, complex and contested; can be viewed from different orientations, and are brought into focus by community members, the community development worker, line managers, government departments and agencies. This section of the report considers the roles of the CDO position within a recovery space from two perspectives. Firstly, as the role was prescribed by LGAQ, the administrator of the CDEI; and secondly, as the role was interpreted by the CDOs negotiating the shifting contexts of both the disaster-affected communities and CDEI program they worked within.

5.1 CDO roles and responsibilities as defined by the CDEI

From a policy perspective, the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) (see Section 2.3) was the foundation upon which the goals and objectives of the CDEI advanced a culture of individual and community self-reliance to emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery. Community development served as the methodology by which the CDOs connected with communities and to local government to assist with disaster recovery, promote disaster preparedness, and strengthen community networks to build resilience.

From an administrative perspective, the Department of Communities contracted out the administration of the CDEI state/federal funding to LGAQ with direct reporting lines from LGAQ through the Department of Communities up to both the Community Development and Recovery Steering Committee and Human and Social Sub-Committee (see Figure 6). LGAQ then acted as the interface between the CDOs and the Department of Communities while the CDOs navigated the relationship between local government as their employer and the disaster affected communities they worked in. As mentioned in Section 4, the CDO recruitment process was undertaken by the 17 CDEI funded councils with the majority of CDOs commencing their employment in August and September, 2011, some 6-7 months after the occurrence of the natural disasters; the last CDO commenced their position in November, 2011 with an end date of June 30, 2013 (regardless of individual start dates).

The political pressure to implement the program quickly meant workers began their employment without all the necessary administrative structures in place. While such a beginning would be challenging in any circumstance it was especially complex given the urgency and sensitivity of the disaster management context. As one stakeholder reflected,

What that tells me is that being prepared in terms of a program was challenging. It was not having all that stuff, not having the resources, not having a framework, not having an understanding about how to report, not having any of that stuff beforehand was really challenging. And having to do that on the go amidst everything else was really difficult. [P23]

As CDEI administrator, LGAQ held an induction forum for the CDOs in October, 2011, as well as distributing documentation to the CDOs that included an Early Essential Information Pack (August, 2011), a Community Development and Recovery Resource Kit (December, 2011) and a Community Development and Recovery Review Guide (December, 2011). The LGAQ documents provided a framework by which the 24 community development officers could understand their roles and responsibilities and drew upon the NSDR to define recovery as the “coordinated process of supporting affected communities in the reconstruction of the built environment and the restoration of emotional, social, economic and natural environment wellbeing” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 7).

LGAQ also utilised Emergency Management Australia’s (EMA) principles of disaster management that are underpinned by a community development approach to enhance the process of disaster recovery (AGD, 2003). EMA’s community development approach is described as both “critical to effective community recovery from a disaster” (AGD, 2003, p. 2) and as forming the basis for the “empowerment of individuals and communities to manage their own recovery” (AGD, 2003, p. 2; LGAQ, 2011a, p. 16).

Thus the overarching aim of the CDOs roles and responsibilities was to “enable a strong and self-reliant community by building community ownership and supporting the achievement of community driven initiatives” (LGAQ, 2011b, pp. 10-11). To achieve this CDOs were required to conduct,

- Mapping and analysis of the impact of the disaster on community groups, networks, community infrastructure and identifying service gaps.
- Comprehensive community engagement to input community needs/strengths and project ideas to inform development and implementation of the Local Reconstruction and Recovery Plan and recovery activities.
- Planning and reporting to ensure contribution of community needs and aspirations into the Local Reconstruction and Recovery Plan.
- Community participation, self-determination and self-healing.
- Provision of timely and accurate information to the whole community in multiple formats.
- Liaison across community, local service provider networks and funding bodies.
- High level strategic community development advice (capacity building) (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 11).

The purpose of the CDO role therefore was to assist “community to work out its own recovery needs and implement projects, activities and events that contribute to the community's recovery, resilience and future disaster preparedness” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 10). In addition to adopting a community development approach within the context of a natural disaster the CDOs, who were recruited and employed by their local council, were also required to navigate their role within the structure of local government. Additionally the CDO role was also linked with disaster management personnel embedded within the hierarchy of local government. For LGAQ it was essential to the success of the CDO role that the workers manage the “parameters and constraints” of their roles which emphasised working “in accordance with Councils priorities” and “to work with not against

Council” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 11). Thus the CDO role was seen as one that was “positioned between Council and the community” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 15).

Finally, the CDO role was also shaped by the funding arrangements of the \$20 million Community Development and Recovery Package (see Figure 6). This funding was administered on behalf of the Department of Communities by (i) LGAQ for the CDEI and (ii) the Department of Local Government and Planning (DLGP) for the Flexible Funding Package (Department of Communities, 2011a). The funding was divided into,

- **Brokerage Funds** (administered by CDEI)
 - Brokerage funds were included in the contract between LGAQ and the 17 councils to support CDO community engagement activities and other related projects.
 - Brokerage funding financially supported the salaries of the CDOs and State-wide Coordinator Community Development and Engagement employed by LGAQ;
- **Flexible Funding Program** (administered by DGLP)
 - Tiered grants funding provided to all 73 local government areas across Queensland by the DGLP for community-led recovery and preparedness projects.
 - The 17 councils who employed CDOs were allocated \$250,000 in Flexible Funding over the two-year period (Department of Communities, 2011b, 2011d; LGAQ, 2011b).

From an administrative perspective this meant CDOs were required to gain project endorsement within the organisational structure of council to gain funding for identified projects, activities and events at two different levels – council and DGLP. Navigating internal bureaucracy to gain funding for project work was frustrating for CDOs who spoke about how the funding approval process lacked consistency:

Every council has managed [funding] differently, which has made it unique and challenging for the CDOs because one feels like, ‘How come he can do this and I can’t do this?’. [P5]

From a community development perspective CDOs were aware that slow bureaucratic processes and inflexible funding guidelines meant community members felt that the CDOs were being unresponsive to their needs and were left wondering, “What do CDOs actually do?”. Our research found that CDOs were particularly critical of the Flexible Funding Package. They described funding guidelines/processes as “inflexible”, “frustrating” and “quite strict and socially oriented when communities wanted other stuff” [P14].

I engaged the school and it is very short of funds and everyone said, ‘We need more books’ but the project committee said ‘No, this is not CD’. So we have access to so called Flexible Funding, but it gets knocked back. [P8]

However other CDOs spoke about how the funding made available for projects, activities and events enhanced their role saying it was “crucial” and “made a vast difference” to the communities they worked in. Having access to funding also meant CDOs were able to go into communities and say “Yes we can do this and yes we can do that.” [P12]

There's been some really positive good for our communities out of this funding ... because we've actually had money to spend on projects for those communities that's made a vast difference. [P21]

These findings support Webber and Jones (2013) analysis which found Victorian Bushfire Community Recovery teams played a post-disaster provider role through the provision of practical assistance, equipment and material goods. However, in the Queensland flood context, for the CDOs the inflexible elements of the program's funding approval process meant CDOs were unsupported by bureaucratic interpretations of what constitutes community development. Thus our research highlights the dissonance between evolving conditions/needs of disaster-affected communities and the rigidity of funding criteria processes as one that places state-imposed restraints upon the CDO role.

5.2 Roles defined by the CDOs

While the purpose of the CDO role was to “help the community work out its own recovery needs and implement projects, activities and events that contribute to recovery, resilience and future disaster preparedness” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 10), our research identified that individual workers interpreted this role in both diverse and fluid ways. As will be discussed further in Section 6, the output nature and focus of the program encouraged CDOs to frame their role through the projects they initiated. While these projects supported the “consistent strengths based approach” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 10) advanced by program literature, they also generated a diverse and innovative array of projects. The enthusiasm by which the CDOs discussed this aspect of their work was a memorable feature of the interview process. Additionally, the number of projects achieved was impressive with over 225,000 “points of engagement”¹² documented by LGAQ to April, 2013 (personal communication, April 4, 2013).

To appreciate the nature of the work CDOs undertook with community we have confined our project overview to a series of case studies developed by LGAQ.¹³ The case studies are informed by “Demonstration Projects” nominated by CDOs to showcase examples of the “range of different responses to community development in recovery work” (LGAQ, 2012b, p. 2) and contributed to the CDEI evaluation process. Our analysis of the case studies revealed a strong alignment with a strengths based approach that Tseoriero, Boyle, and Enright (2010) describe as having a primary role of “enabling local people to understand their individual and collective strengths and resources and then to harness these for ongoing development of self and community” (Tseoriero, Boyle, & Enright, 2010, p. 34). Certainly, the case studies evidenced capacity building, networking, and cultural development while other projects involved (re)building of infrastructure, community celebration events, health and wellbeing promotion, as well as disaster preparedness workshops and training.

The following sections will discuss the convergence between how CDOs philosophically understood the CDO role as a process and the performance of the role through project work – a theme we will return to in our conclusion.

¹² ‘Numbers of people involved in an activity or in receipt of a product delivered via the CDEI’ (LGAQ, 2012).

¹³ Case studies of the Demonstration Projects are available via LGAQ's website (<http://www.lgaq.asn.au>)

5.2.1 Role 1: Community facilitator and supporter

When asked to describe the CDO role many workers said their position involved “building” and “supporting”, with an emphasis on building and supporting “relationships” and “connections” with communities. CDOs focused on the role of facilitating and supporting a community process as the following quotes demonstrate:

It's really only my role to facilitate, not do. It's all that facilitation of bringing them in and making the decisions themselves and leaving a fairly low imprint when I leave really ... I'm not doing it, the community are doing it. [P18]

For the community I work with it's around being that conduit, assisting them to find their own way, to facilitate, I suppose. What do you need? What's the problem? What do we need to do to fix this? And how do we go about it? [P15]

It's about building community support and building a sense of community as well. [P4]

As a worker the capacity is in the community – but I see my role as sparking an idea – which I then support. [P2]

Sometimes it's just giving them [community] a bit of support and it's understanding what the gap is between what they do have and what they don't have and how can we advocate for that and that's pretty much what my role has been. [P11]

Such findings resonate with the literature reported in Section 3.2 that assign the community development worker a facilitative role through supporting community building and participation.

5.2.2 Role 2: Network builder

Many CDOs took as their focus collaborating with and strengthening the ties between service providers, community organisations and volunteers. As the following CDOs observed,

So that gives it more sustainability and ownership because it's not going to be in the long-term reliant on us, it will be reliant on the relationships between the services and if the relationships fall apart they will have at least still have developed and talked through. [P3]

Other community organisations and agencies have been exceptionally open to the CDEI initiative. They've been exceptionally good: Salvation Army, Red Cross. I have a working partnership with a range of organisations and I can say that they've been brilliant. Everyone has the same vision for recovery and resilience. [P4]

- By partnering with Volunteering Queensland one of the Brisbane CDOs held *Natural Disaster Resilience Leadership* training for neighbourhood centre coordinators to be better prepared and up-skilled to operate as recovery centres in the event of future disasters. In addition to supporting local networks and responses the training also gave rise to a stronger network of community centres.
- Increasing community connectedness was the aim of the *Pro-Social Funding Program* that allocated funding through a service providers selection panel to local groups and organisations to facilitate 21 community projects. Community capacity was built by

strengthening relations between service providers and with community, as well as providing project opportunities for community education regarding disaster awareness.

- The *Bundaberg Flood Recovery Interagency Forum* worked closely with local service providers to share resources, knowledge and strengthen networks to enable a more cooperative approach to disaster preparation, response and recovery

5.2.3 Role 3: Capacity builder

CDOs drew upon communities' knowledge, expertise and experience to generate community capacity building projects that established and supported local community groups to develop and strengthen skills, resources, information and support. One CDO manager reflected on the strengths of this process to say,

People in our [community development] team are talking to the community groups and building those relationships and helping them so they've got a stronger relationship with the Council, with each other, then with their own communities. So there's a really strong strategy but it can look pretty simple at the front. [P20]

And from the perspective of the CDOs,

The way we work is around that capacity building in that [community] space. We're getting community groups to work together. [P19]

The rationale of where I take my CD skills is that it's not me doing the role it's about community taking charge of it themselves. 'You're the guide.' So my job is not to do their job, my job is just to open the doors. [P11]

I think this is the first time people are seeing there are resources within the community. [P10]

The kinds of initiatives supported by the CDOs were as varied as the communities themselves and included storybook projects, community gardens, choirs, family fun days, markets, yoga classes, movies in the park, Men's Sheds, youth and seniors events. Numerous practical products were also developed ranging from brochures and fridge magnets to USBs (for document storage). For example,

- The *Mentoring for Grant Writing Initiative* utilised community mentors with expertise in successful grant writing to improve the grant writing skills of local community groups and organisations in order to fund their activities and programs.
- Building the skills and capacity of local hall committees aimed to restore the social connectedness in the *Halls in the Spotlight* project through community involvement and the sponsorship of local activities.
- Recognising the integral role community support centres play in providing social support during disasters formed the basis of strengthening the governance arrangements and the organisational capabilities of the *Chinchilla Family Support Centre*. This was achieved by a process of identifying the needs the Centre, then reaching agreement, determining roles and developing a working framework with Centre members.
- Advancing social connectivity and networking skills was the driver behind the *Fordham Park Alpha Jockey Club Inc* that held its first race meeting since 2002. The race day was seen as an opportunity for remote and rural community members to maintain vital social connections

and to become actively involved in the process of sharing their skills, resources and networks to restore the dilapidated race course and facilities. The upgraded facilities at the race course can also be used as an evacuation centre for future disaster events.

5.2.4 Role 4: Arts worker

Arts focused community development was seen as especially important way of generating community connectedness. Many CDOs worked with communities to produce outstanding arts projects to celebrate resilience and recovery through the creation of public art pieces (murals, mosaics), facilitating art awards and exhibitions, musical events, theatre performances, photographic workshops, exhibitions and books, dance performances and workshops, history books and digital story-telling.

- Responding to Theodore's interest in developing a collection of public art the CDO worked with community members to produce the *Junction Park Mosaic Wall* located in the town centre. Supported by a local artist who used local networks to consult with community the Mosaic Wall was completed with the assistance of over 60 community members that advanced building community capacity and skills, as well as strengthening community ties and healing.
- An emotional response to a flood anniversary exhibition motivated the organising committee to produce a photographic book, *Flood and Recovery: The Somerset Story* to acknowledge the resilience of the Somerset communities and to provide a historical record for future generations.

5.2.5 Role 5: Celebrator

Importantly, CDOs identified that "Restoring their sense of fun" [P10] was key to restoring community wellbeing. As one CDO commented, "You have to create a sense of community when the community's been fractured. And how do you do that, you make it fun. You get people involved, you connect them with your message that way" [P9]. Another CDO noted that,

One of the biggest things probably within the last three months of consultations has been 'Ok we've talked about disaster preparedness and resilience, let's look at celebrating how resilient we really are and let's look at [our region]'. A lot of people are saying, 'We're keen to keep educating and hearing these messages, but can't we do it in a really fun way instead of being so serious?' [P12]

As well as achieving a sense of fun CDOs brought communities together by holding festivals to celebrate recovery and the restoration of community infrastructure, street parties to celebrate wellbeing, community movie nights and barbeques, and high teas to share stories and ideas.

- Another project informed by community consultation drew upon community engagement and cooperation to present the *R.O.C. UP North Burnett Concert* (Resilience, Opportunity, Community, Uniting, People). A reference group made up of a broad cross-section of community and the Local Area Disaster Management Group organised the event and activities (afternoon tea celebrating community recovery and resistance; school activities) prior to the concert which attracted over 1800 people from across the region.

5.2.6 Role 6: Infrastructure builder

Some CDOs found that communities wanted to beautify main streets in their community, dedicate community areas as places for reflection, install flood memorials, and build community gardens.

- Despite initial community resistance the CDO based in Toowoomba found that a strategic communications plan to inform community about the reconstruction of the *Jellicoe Street Bridge* contributed to both reconnecting residents and businesses and strengthened lines of communication between the two groups.
- For the residents on the Cassowary Coast who lost their main community meeting place to Cyclone Yasi the redevelopment of *Penning Park* was considered integral to community recovery processes and resilience building.

5.2.7 Role 7: Cultural development worker

In recognition of the impact the flood events had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities CDOs undertook community celebration events, cultural awareness programs as well as disaster preparedness and management training, sports day, art projects, family and musical events. Of particular significance,

- The *Jumbun Cultural Engagement* project was initiated in response to the Jumbun community wishing to record and document their cultural craft and knowledge. The project built on working relationships established through a previous CDO project and focused on sharing traditional knowledge between elders and young people.

5.2.8 Role 8: Educator and trainer

Not surprisingly many CDEI projects, events and activities were given over to building resilience and disaster preparedness including community training and workshops, disaster plan development and the distribution of disaster management information. Some projects also produced products such as document wallets, fridge magnets and USBs (for document storage). By establishing working groups CDOs were also able to strengthen the organisational capacity of local community organisations.

- Working collaboratively with community was a defining feature of *Be Prepared Brisbane* project which was informed by local community knowledge and adopted a community-driven collaborative approach to working with community members and service providers. By identifying community strengths, skills and assets communities formed working groups to develop community preparedness plans.
- Identifying the need for building local networks, improved communication and coordination was a result of the CDO community consultation process that resulted in the *Gympie Get Ready Resilience Program*, a suite of Disaster management strategies incorporating the Resilient Leaders Program and the Resilient Leaders Network. The Resilient Leaders Network recognises the key role community leaders play in connecting communities and to advance effective communication between community and services during all phases of an emergency event.

The community development approach was understood to be “critical” to the effectiveness and sustainability of community recovery and long-term change (LGAQ, 2011b). As one stakeholder explained,

One of the hopes is that we'll be able to create linkages between the community and government and create relationships so after we leave they'll still have that relationship and they'll still influence each another. [P25]

5.3 Communicating success

The use of demonstration projects was just one innovative tool employed by this initiative to capture rich qualitative data emerging from these projects. The demonstration project sat alongside a community mapping process and an online forum known as PlaceStories to form a suite of reporting tools for the CDOs who were tasked with collecting data for the official review¹⁴ of the CDEI. Data collected by the CDOs was used to measure the progress and impact of their work, informing both the CDEI review reports and the fortnightly and quarterly reports for the funding bodies submitted by LGAQ.

Recognising the inherent challenge of evidencing community development within a recovery context the program utilised an online reporting platform known as PlaceStories. This reporting tool was designed to bring the 24 CDOs who were located throughout Queensland (see Figure 8) together to form a “vibrant community of practice” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 12). In addition to being a forum for the CDOs to capture the process and value of their work it was anticipated that PlaceStories would strengthen “communication and collaboration within and between communities, networks and organisations” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 12).

The Mapping Tool or “Star Map” was used to facilitate the CDO community mapping process which documented the impacts of the natural disasters on people’s lives. Community consultation processes were conducted at key points of the program which enabled disaster affected people to rate their responses to a set of social indicators (home, place, people, economy, vibrancy and connections).

Paradoxically, it was the 2013 Australia Day weekend flood events in Queensland that delivered a valuable opportunity to build upon the evidence base of the CDO’s positive impact in their communities. Only two years after the January 2011 floods South East Queensland communities were the recipients of another round of significant damage and disruption. Stakeholder feedback from re-affected regions attributed communities being “more prepared” and “people responded in a different way to the events” to the work of the CDOs. From a community development viewpoint there was also evidence of a relational re-positioning as the following stakeholder describes,

People started talking about relationships and individual capacity ... people understood their roles and responsibilities ... services, groups and individuals understood how to work with each other, there was this connection and collegiate support between councils and community agencies. [P23]

Unfortunately, this information did not form part of the formal CDEI evaluation process as it fell outside the programs terms of reference. As researchers, we were cognisant of the significance and richness of this anecdotal evidence but saddened to think that time and resource constraints meant it was not able to inform the invaluable work undertaken by the CDOs.

¹⁴ Undertaken by consultancy firm, Fieldworx <http://www.fieldworx.com.au/>

6. A Critical Conversation

While these statements clearly support theoretical and normative understandings about the role of community development in building community capacity, and in no way do we wish to diminish these accomplishments, there is another story to tell about the CDEI. It was at the level of praxis that community development processes for the CDOs were less clear. This is because community development practice occupies a highly problematic and unique “dilemmatic space” (Hoggett, Mayo & Miller, 2009) that leads to difficult practice dilemmas for community workers. A more critical lens is therefore required to understand how the role of the CDO is enacted in this dilemmatic space, and to move the role of a community worker beyond what Catherine McDonald refers to as “the ontological comfort of being a nice person with good intentions” (McDonald, 2006, p. 114).

As flagged at the start of Section 5, the work of the CDOs is one mediated by context and relations of power. The question is not simply one of what roles, relationships and efficacy were evident in their work, but also, from a more critical perspective, what the effects of power were, and how power was exercised within and through the CDOs. Key themes that emerged through a more critical lens included,

- The discursive struggle for power which constructed the CDOs as translators and interpreters.
- The role of the CDO in working between councils and communities.
- The shaping of the role by a challenging accountability regime.
- The privileging of disaster management rhetoric.
- The role of CDOs as policy actors working in – but rarely against – the state.

It is to these key themes that this discussion now turns.

6.1 CDOs as translators and interpreters: The challenge of policy language

The issue of language was the first site for critical engagement with the role of the CDO. Section 5 provided an appreciative interpretation of the role of the CDO, by simply naming and categorising the work occurring, as reported by CDOs and stakeholders. However through a more critical lens it is possible to see that the way language is used to define and explain an idea, is itself, a site of struggle. Differences over language and definitions are not merely semantic debates but represent dynamics of knowledge and power, authorising certain voices and ideas and correspondingly silencing or at least making less authoritative, the voices of others (Fairclough, 1989).

As explained in Section 2 of this report, undertaking community development work within the post-disaster context involved all three layers of government. The CDEI program was articulated through an amalgamation of community development concepts promoted by Emergency Management Australia and government rhetoric espoused by the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. Thus a particular challenge for many CDOs was trying to integrate a community development approach with the disaster management policy language of the CDEI program. As one stakeholder explained,

Policy dictates that it’s going to be done this way, and they write policy in a very, not only black and white on paper, but they have a very black and white mentality about policy. But

we're dealing with grey, we're dealing with people and variables. We say it's a people business but it's not. It's a policy business, it's a policy and process business. [P26]

Far from being straightforward, words such as "recovery", "resilience" and "disaster preparedness" were often points of deliberation within everyday practice for the CDOs. When asked about integrating the concepts of recovery, resilience and disaster preparedness into their practice one CDO stated,

Actually it took me a little while [laughs]. It's like, what does that mean? How do I need to practice in that context? First of all, I have to understand all those words and terms. And that took a little while to work through. [P11]

And as one CDO manager observed,

No one, I think, was really clear as to what flood recovery and resilience actually meant. There were no clear words around that at the beginning about [how] we want communities to end up...there was none of that conversation. I guess it's all been a bit of trial and error. [P21]

During the interviews, CDOs were comfortable discussing the theory of disaster preparedness. However, they also revealed that words such as "recovery" and "resilience" were generally not used in everyday grassroots practice, or were re-interpreted when working within communities. As one CDO stated, "The recovery, resilience, disaster management messaging – that's for me to make sense of. They don't need to get it" [P9]. What this meant is that the CDOs were required to take on a translator role whereby they found themselves re-interpreting disaster management concepts for community. However, this process was far from simple.

I think they're [community and disaster management] also speaking different languages in some respects. Disaster management has [its] own little language, a way of being and doing in policy: 'Let's stick to doctrine and let's stick to the policy'. Communities view things differently, no policy, they just go about their thing and yes they follow the rules of the law, but they have a different perspective of what it is and I think that it's very important that CDO role is being able to interpret the language and break those language barriers. [P26]

An analysis of language use showed that most of the CDOs changed their language according to what was reflected back by community and according to the needs of reporting and working within the organisational context. This translation between programmatic and non-programmatic agendas is common for people working at the interface of government and community. However, what is interesting in this situation is that language was not simply translated but sometimes fiercely debated.

According to CDOs, community members resisted use of the language of "recovery". As one CDO stated, "People want to know very little about recovery now ... I don't use the word recovery because people roll their eyes when they hear recovery and say 'I'm over it'" [P11]. This was a regularly occurring theme, with half of the CDOs arguing that the language of "recovery" was experienced as "backwards looking" within communities. CDOs reported that tensions emerged between themselves and local residents as people asked questions such as, "recovery from what?"

The language of recovery implied a deficit among local residents – an implication to which many were adverse.

Other CDOs struggled with what official program terms meant and how they would be translated into community development practice in a post-disaster context. The dilemma was further compounded by CDOs needing to identify when communities they worked with “were over it” or had “moved on” from particular stages of the recovery process. Additionally, our analysis indicates that many CDOs also wanted to look forward, and hence chose language more reflective of this aspiration. For some CDOs the language of resilience was more acceptable than recovery:

People are over disasters, they’re over being on tenterhooks, and being in a constant state of awareness; it’s debilitating. The more we normalise things and make it part of every day and really embrace that idea about resilience the better we’ll be. [P9]

The language of resilience was understood, for some CDOs, as forward looking and it was this time-dimension that made it generally much more palatable than that of recovery. Yet practitioners also spent time wrestling with what they understood the term to mean. For example one CDO named it as “bounce-back-ability” [P1], while another saw it as “just getting in and getting it done and getting back on track” [P5].

At the same time, the language of resilience incurred scepticism, seen as empty rhetoric by community members and CDOs:

Resilience is a buzzword amongst the agencies and the government and the workers and everyone else. It’s one of those words that people in the community either just blink at you or say ‘What are those words?’ [P3]

Another finding in relation to language was that “preparedness” was the most readily understood word for most community members, and therefore easier to use for CDOs:

We won’t be using resilience as a main focus because it doesn’t resonate with people but the ‘be prepared’ focus: yes. Our focus has been much more on preparedness because being prepared gives you a way to help you recover. It gives you back some degree of power. [P3]

While there were fewer problems with the concept of disaster preparedness, for some CDOs adhering to elements of the PPRR¹⁵ cycle was an obvious constraint on their practice:

Part of me feels we’re doing too much on preparedness and the emergency side of preparedness but at the same time you can’t not do it because it’s required, it’s the PPRR. It just goes around and around and around. It’s a never ending battle. [P5]

As the quotes and analysis above demonstrate, for some CDOs, the dilemma was how best to understand the intent of the policy language. The goal was to work out what was meant by recovery, resilience and preparedness and how best practices could support that intent. For other CDOs, rather than simply assimilating program language they worked hard to find an everyday language, thereby avoiding technical language or government jargon. However given the physical and

¹⁵ See section 2.3 for further discussions of the PPRR (prevention, preparation, response and recovery) cycle.

structural location of their role within local government this was not a simple task, as the next section will explain.

6.2 “Piggy in the middle”: Working between council and community

While the CDEI was funded through a federal-state government partnership, the CDOs were employed by individual councils and hence required to work within the political and bureaucratic structure of local government. Nevertheless, there was no consistency regarding the physical or organisational location of the CDOs within the councils. This resulted in a diverse range of employment structures and relationships. The different ways in which councils responded to the CDEI program, and how they interpreted the role of the CDO can be viewed positively as the shaping of the role to meet local – including council – needs. However, the process of interpretation can also be seen as an act of resistance by conservative councils to a Labor state government directive. In other words, it is not merely the CDOs who are operating within relations of power – but the councils employing them as well. These relations of power operated to constrain or support the CDO role and yet were well outside the ability of CDOs to influence. Our analysis revealed that many CDOs found the challenge of navigating multifaceted relationships with community, council, service providers, disaster management personnel and LGAQ placed a heavy demand on the role. To explore this relational aspect of the role this section of the report focuses on the ways in which (i) the CDO role was located within the bureaucracy and internal culture of local government, and (ii) how the CDOs managed the interface between the vertical structure of local government and the horizontal processes of community development work.

The starting point for this discussion is the organisational and physical location of the CDO role. The organisational location of the CDO was reported as making an enormous difference to the role that could be performed. Some CDOs were located in community development teams or disaster management teams within council, and consequently enjoyed collegial and managerial support. Several CDOs described their council managers positively, as being “fantastic”, “passionate” and “laid-back” and another noted that “having a champion in local government makes a difference” [P11]. However, this contrasted with the experience of those CDOs who saw themselves as having little support, and who were physically or programmatically isolated. CDOs were located in areas in council as diverse as finance and recycling, often for reasons of convenience rather than program logic. As a consequence of this, some CDOs were given work well outside of the scope of their role.

The physical location of the CDO also affected the work. In at least one case, the worker was physically located outside the council, in a shared community space, to encourage community access. Yet in another, the workers located in council were hidden behind bureaucratic and security protocols and access was restricted. The location of the CDOs was thus both physical and symbolic, reflecting how council understood the CDEI and the CDO role. In turn this served to enable or constrain the performance of the CDO role.

When local government was initially introduced to the concept of the CDEI some councils were uncertain about the value of the program, and responded instead with requests for practical assistance such as flood levees, lights and helicopters. Not all councils had incumbent community development teams or officers, which contributed to doubts about the relevancy of community development and limited understandings about what community development work actually involved. A number of stakeholders commented that community development often “sits outside

other Council business” [P27] and that community development workers are sometimes considered to be “airy fairy people” or the “warm and fuzzy people that sort of just talk about stuff but don’t do a lot” [P28]. CDOs also reported “It has taken a while [for Council] to understand the value of the work we’re doing” [P19] and that “sometimes Council don’t see the benefit of these projects” [P8].

For the CDOs such politics were manifest at a personal level. The difficulty is that the program was both decentralised and centralised at once. Alongside their line management within council, CDOs had a direct reporting line to the CDEI administrator located within LGAQ – the local government peak body located in the state capital of Brisbane (See Figure 6). For some CDOs the tension of being employed and managed by different bodies with different agendas and reporting lines created uncertainty about to and for whom they were ultimately responsible. The tension of separating different responsibilities is clear in the following four comments,

In the end you have all these masters: so which is the one you’re going to let have the power on which particular day? [P18]

Well you know, I’ve got to keep the councillors happy, I have to keep our executive team happy, I have to keep my management team happy, the working team, the community, the coordinators. [P15]

I’ve got nine councillors, a CEO, three EMs, 2000 people and any amount of tourists and essentially they’re all my bosses in very strange ways ... I work in this huge team. [P10]

Well there is an ambiguity of expectations – what we’re expected to do by different stakeholders (LGAQ, Council, community).[P2]

And while one CDO named a clear allegiance to the community,

At the end of the day, I’m here to perform for my community. The rest is often clutter. [P14]

– the majority of CDOs framed their responsibility as being to the relationship between council and community.

My sense is that I’m in-between – like I’m there as an advocate for community recovery and community resilience and I’m there to report on any issues to the Council to see how they can assist their community – that’s the approach I’ve taken with this. [P4]

The consequence was adoption of the less visible role of mediators, “fence menders” and “bridge builders”. The CDOs worked to overcome negative community perceptions about local government in general and repair relationships between communities and council that had been damaged as a consequence of different disaster events. CDOs referred to residents who felt council had abandoned them during the floods or had not responded to the disaster events effectively. One CDO felt that council was a “target” after the disaster with community asking why “didn’t you fix our roads quicker?” [P2]. Such attitudes “made our work quite ineffective in the beginning” [P2]. As a stakeholder remarked,

Part of the challenge is that you represent something [community members] hate and resent because [Council] didn’t provide them with the questions or the answers that they needed at the time of a disaster. Sometimes ... you step back and think ‘Hang on a minute

I've got to mend this bridge that someone else broke. It had nothing to do with me but it has a flow-on effect for what I do, and I can't make this community resilient until that bridge is mended, because they're not ready to mend it, or they're not ready to cross that bridge and start again.' [P26]

In other locations CDOs were working in contexts where negative attitudes existed prior to the flood events. One particular issue was what workers referred to as "amalgamation woes". In 2008 the Queensland State Government amalgamated smaller councils and shires into regional councils. While some CDOs found their role gave them the opportunity to initiate the "restoration of those [post amalgamation] connections" [P10], others expended enormous time and energy to simply manage the residual anger generated by the amalgamation process, and ongoing resistance to this change. As one CDO explained, there was much hostility and mistrust of anyone associated with local government:

Because I'm working for a hugely amalgamated Council I really needed my Kevlar vest and bash hat when I first went out there. [P]eople love to hate council and when you are working with community you become the public face of council. [P15]

CDOs and stakeholders reported developing particular strategies for engaging both council and community which meant that CDOs sometimes advocated for community and sometimes on behalf of council.

We are piggy in the middle, we're taking what community want to Council and it may not be anything to do with our projects; it might be the fact that people are still complaining because a particular drain hasn't been fixed yet, and they're worried now with the rain coming on. So we advocate for community but I also find the role very necessary to take what Council are doing back to community as well because there's such a big gap there and people don't understand how councils work. [P18]

This hostile context, alongside a lack of familiarity with the idea of community development also created scepticism in some communities, and resistance to the work CDOs were engaged to do. As well, CDOs spoke about how council and community members held different perspectives and sometimes limited understandings about the role of community development. As one CDO explained,

Few people understand what community development is: they think it's having cups of coffee and chatting...Explaining the value of what we do is something I find myself doing a lot! [P15].

The lack of understanding of their role made it difficult for the CDOs to gain some traction and created longer lead times for the work being undertaken:

[Community] see flood recovery as fixing the drains, fixing that road, and there's that sense of keeping the community happy and content while I scout around and do my job. It is a softly, softly approach and the majority of community don't understand, particularly the community I work in, don't understand the community development approach. [P4]

In many ways this dilemma is illustrative of community perceptions of needs and assets, and the clear demarcation within government of “siloes” approaches to intervention (for example, with one department responsible for fixing roads and another for “fixing” people’s mental health). In contrast, CDOs employed a more holistic understanding of communities and their needs, and saw themselves as engaging “on community’s terms”. However, they faced a paradox as communities’ identified their needs in ways that the official community development program did not permit them to respond. There were tensions between community perceptions of what a CDO should be doing and what a CDO was mandated to do within their role description. The issue of chainsaw use provides an interesting illustration of this dilemma. One CDO explained,

Every community consultation led to chainsaw needs being the number one issue. Without a chainsaw ticket you cannot use a chainsaw. After a disaster everyone buys chainsaws and /or an axe. We need to encourage this – our role is to make it safe. [P1]

Community members explained to the CDO that what they needed was help to get “tickets” (that is, a formal qualification) enabling them to use their chainsaws in the aftermath of a disaster. Residents’ analysis was that the crucial issue after a cyclone or flood was clearing fallen trees so that they could go and check on neighbours and then start clearing debris to quickly “normalise” the surroundings. The dilemma was created when the CDO received such a request but was not mandated within their job description or the program policy guidelines to support the residents in such an initiative. For example,

[The program management] had an issue with it because they don’t see it as disaster preparedness and argued that it fell outside the CDEI guidelines. They didn’t ever ring me; they didn’t ever confer with me to say, ‘What the hell has chainsaw tickets got to do with storm preparation?’ They just said it fell outside the CDEI guidelines. [P1]

Another CDO lamented,

What people wanted were two-way radios...What I could offer was to coordinate a film night. [P16]

Our findings indicate that the CDOs were mandated to facilitate the official program of psycho-social recovery but local people’s understanding of recovery was often more focused on the hard skills of clearing and fixing roads and bridges or access to services and infrastructure. This view was supported by a CDEI stakeholder who neatly summed up a common response to community development work,

Community development’s got a bad name I think, it’s so woolly: ‘It’s the journey’ – it’s fluffy. [P22]

Such views were not merely reflective of the confusion over CDO roles and responsibilities. They also revealed a more complex dynamic. The positioning of the program by council, the language used, and the framing of the work of the CDOs, served to assist or in some cases invalidate the agenda of community development, as further sections of the report will show.

6.3 Accountability regimes and “the tail that wagged the dog”

The positioning of the CDOs within a state government framework combined with a lack of understanding of the nature and purpose of community development, created an additional level of complexity. The political nature of the program, involving all three layers of government, highly sensitive issues of death, grief, loss and distress, economic fallout, and media attention all placed enormous pressure on CDOs to be seen to be acting quickly, and to have highly visible aspects to their work. The program had tight accountability mechanisms that the majority of CDOs described as “onerous” and reporting tools that placed emphasis upon quantity. For example, CDOs mentioned having to report on the number of meetings held and participant numbers at events as examples of impact. Yet as one stakeholder observed,

You’re asking people to change their attitudes, you’re asking people to break habits and make decisions for themselves; behavioural change. You can’t measure that in the terms that a government bean-counter can measure. [P26]

Such experiences accord with a global shift in development practice where practice is being strongly driven by what is being called “the results agenda” (Eyben, 2013). There is little recognition in this bureaucratic space of the less tangible and slower processes of community work. This view is supported by the following quotes from stakeholders who said,

The challenge with any funded work is over the last few years is that we have moved to a system of reporting that is around counting numbers, numbers of people, numbers of activities. [P23]

... the Department [of Communities] is the owner of the policy and ultimately [it] has to account for ‘Was this \$35m a good use of money?’ ... I just think CD workers need to care more about results. [P22]

Although there was a rhetoric of community development, the program was also articulated through a public management filter. This approach demanded levels of accountability and the monitoring of evidence that eclipsed more nuanced processes of development work. Thus the CDOs were caught between being responsive to the audit demands of government and the longer-term relational and partnership needs of community work. This tension was articulated by one CDO as the difference between the longer-term processes of community work as opposed to quick service-delivery mode:

You just can’t go out there and provide a service, you have to build a relationship. And that relationship means having some community development skills about how to build a relationship with communities and that’s when your work will start flowing for you once you start using that framework. [P11]

There was an additional shock for many CDOs who had not had experience within bureaucracies. For some CDOs, the local government context demanded a particularly steep learning curve. One CDO who had local government experience reflected,

I know it would take people a good three to six months to work out what really happens in local government. If you were someone with no local government experience working in a local government environment it would be quite challenging. [P12]

The slower relational practices of community work were seen as requiring more time than the program allowed. While two CDOs embraced the time pressures imposed upon the role as a welcome guarantee against building dependency, for the majority of CDOs there was explicit frustration about the two-year time limit of their role. This limit was perceived as a constraint in terms of their community development practice and for the communities they were placed in. As one CDO explained,

CD is years, it's lifetimes, it's not, 'Here's a bucket of money for two years', it doesn't make an ongoing, sustainable community; it makes a short-term fix. It's been great, it's been a benefit and we've been able to do a lot but in some ways it's gone against those communities too because they haven't had to sit back and think about it...two years isn't long enough, two years isn't anywhere near the time. [P5]

Our observations of four regional CDEI forums reinforce these findings. CDOs, often cognisant of the longer processes required of relational practices underpinned by a partnership approach (see Burkett & Ruhunda, 2010) were frustrated by the instrumental and auditing requirements of multiple layers of accountability. The reporting demands by so many stakeholders positioned LGAQ in a monitoring role, and this in turn placed burdensome demands upon the CDOs. For the CDOs this was characterised by “constantly shifting goalposts” that were “counter-productive for our programs”, poor communication, and conflicting messages. Reporting frameworks risked becoming – in the words of one CDO – the tail that wagged the dog [P9]. This profoundly affected the relationship between the CDOs and LGAQ.

However, as noted previously, program management did attempt to capture qualitative data (see Section 5.2) through the use of an online forum called PlaceStories. Unfortunately, CDOs were overwhelming critical of this reporting/evaluation tool at two key levels. Firstly, technical issues caused privacy and confidentiality issues about information uploaded by the CDOs. Secondly, the anticipated use of PlaceStories to support a “vibrant community of practice” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 12) was obscured by its application as a data collection tool to comply with the demands of the results agenda. This top-down rather than collective approach to evaluation caused intense debate between the CDOs and program management leading CDOs to comment that “they just want[ed] good news stories basically” [P18] and that PlaceStories “got in the way of genuinely communicating” [P9]. The results agenda not only clashes with an action-learning ethos but creates frustrations that can limit the possibilities for good community development work. It ties funding to very strict reporting regimes which limits flexibility. The restrictive nature of the program became obvious when floods reoccurred across Queensland in the Summer of 2013. Unspent funding was not permitted to be redirected towards new disasters. Thus CDOs found themselves in the unenviable position of being unable to use disaster management funds to respond to the current disaster, and instead discussing “recovery” from an event that had occurred two years previously. This made it very difficult to promote the usefulness of the program to local communities that needed immediate responses to emerging threats.

In five other locations it became clear that a flood recovery program was not wanted. This did not mean that community development was not needed, but rather that the issues towns were facing were about the impact of mining, and the economic struggles of rural towns. What was needed was not recovery or disaster preparedness but the building of community and infrastructure, and cultural connection. This required enormous creativity on the part of workers to reframe their activities and negotiate reporting requirements to better meet the needs of community members. One CDO for example reframed his work in terms of economic sustainability rather than flood recovery.

6.4 Community development and disaster management: A clash of two cultures

The challenge of undertaking community development within the vertical structures of council, in a complex policy environment was further exacerbated by engagement with the disaster management personnel and a very different ideology.

The CDO's mandate to collaborate with disaster management personnel to facilitate disaster preparedness activities and events amplified the tenuous relationship between CDOs and disaster management perspectives both within and outside of council. CDOs expressed frustration at the "rigid" nature of disaster management workers (e.g. SES workers and fire officers). They also acknowledged that these disaster management workers similarly experienced difficulty working with and understanding the "unstructured" nature of community development work. CDOs described the different approaches to the work through a dichotomy of rigidity and flexibility. They saw this dichotomy as contributing to the challenge of locating and legitimising the CDO role within the vertical structures of local government and disaster management teams. This is supported by the following stakeholders who observed that,

[Disaster management] have a very un-community-friendly, rigid approach to their life and their outlook. They see community development as meaning that 'they get the key messages we're trying to tell them, they've got nothing important to say'. Now in some sectors of government that's changing but generally speaking in the disaster management offices it's not. It's still very much a technical response and the most important thing is that 'the community understands this message'. So, I still think they just operate in a different mindset and that's a constraint. [P25]

When asked to describe the tensions experienced in the role one CDO replied,

Just the impenetrability of the whole disaster management arrangements and I seriously don't think that any value was placed on the roles and what we could achieve by the blue shirts. They don't know people. [P9]¹⁶

The same CDO felt the different methodologies employed by disaster management and community development also explained the lack of meaningful engagement between the two areas:

Pretty early on I realised the clear rationale for having community development workers working in this space with community was because the disaster management blue shirts don't necessarily engage community very well. They're good at saving lives, they're good at

¹⁶ 'Blue shirts' was used as a verbal short-hand to refer to EMQ.

following procedures, they're good at doing all that stuff while it's operationalised but in the general daily run of the mill they don't know how to change their language to embrace community so they can become partners. They're very top down and we've made a conscious decision to be bottom up in terms of the role of the CDO. [P9]

And as one stakeholder explained,

A lot of council areas have Disaster Management Officers but they don't focus on community engagement. Their focus is making sure that their plans are in place, that their infrastructure is flood safe, bushfire safe. [P26]

Another CDO described the hierarchical environment of disaster management as a barrier to engaging with community:

The fire service really did have no concept of community development. It was a military organisation. So, to get these guys that have been out on the fire ground for years, they've risen up the ranks and then [for us] to say to them, 'Well now we're going to talk to the community and we're going to have some field visits and all of this' – well it was just treated with total suspicion. [P16]

For some CDOs the challenge was named as trying to work with disaster management teams embedded within the structure of council, who were territorial, resistant and quite often hostile to incorporating a community development approach to disaster management. This tension was heightened by the fact that most of the CDOs were employed without having a pre-existing relationship with council disaster management teams and with little or no experience/training of working in a disaster situation. CDOs described disaster management as "not my area of strength". At the same time the unprecedented nature of the work was acknowledged:

It is a really confusing space, it's messy and no-one knows what they're doing, it changes very rapidly, it's new. So for everyone in the field not only is it messy in that there's a lot of people doing a lot of stuff that's not orchestrated but it's all new, so everyone's learning. It's an interesting environment as well because there's no models, there's nothing to really test what you're doing and I think that's why there's such a sense of confusion because there's all these people saying 'I got funded to do stuff what am I going to do, what are the priorities?' [P25]

Stakeholders noted the relationship between disaster management personnel and the CDOs was characterised by "lack of interest", lack of "buy in" and lack of communication. These stakeholders argued that disaster management "needs to be a whole of council function that looks at how everyone can contribute" to overcome its siloed approach to the elements of the PRR cycle. For instance, a disaster management focus on "response rather than the four phases are and where we [community development] fit in that" [P27]; disaster management could be more involved in the recovery phase rather than stating "that's not us". However, as researchers we were also intrigued to learn that stakeholders (with a background in community development) understood amalgamating disaster management with community development work to mean that community development would be shaped to fit a disaster management framework.

As the quotes above demonstrate, the move from a single agency emergency-centric approach towards the inclusion of multiple players undertaking a wide range of emergency management services (Gabriel, 2002) does not necessarily embrace a community development approach when it is practiced at the grass roots level. Our analysis revealed that CDOs experienced particular resistance to the CDO role because their work was not seen “as a priority” or disaster management officers could “talk the talk but not actually walk the walk”. Thus, our analysis raises the question about where best to locate community development workers given the difficulties in gaining legitimacy/acceptance for the CDO role through the vertical structure of local government and disaster management. However it also speaks to a changing culture within disaster management and the exercising of power formally through structures and lines of accountability, and informally through discourse and relationship.

6.5 CDOs as policy actors: Working both “in and against the state”

So far we have acknowledged the experience of the CDOs as being “in the middle” of government and community, and working in roles to navigate these spaces including the roles of advocate, translator, interpreter, mediator and fence-builder. Such experiences are not surprising given the wide range of community development approaches and methods that have been adopted by all layers of government and the private sector. Ambiguities and competing definitions of community development and its practices, processes and values abound and are well documented in research and the literature. Therefore we offer the following commentary from Hoggett, Mayo and Miller (2009) that “community development sits on the unstable boundary between state and civil society both reflecting and seeking to change those relationships” (p. 31). We use this idea as a springboard to explore the “dilemmatic space” that exists between practitioner, government and community.

Toomey (2009) considers the roles of both community development practitioners and organisations as products of “multiple and often conflicting forces” (p. 181) that include the “goals of the intervening institution, the needs of the community, the vested interests of state and local governments and business groups, as well as the personal aspirations of the individual practitioner” (p.181). Toomey (2009) also argues it is because the actions of community development are ill-defined that there exists a tendency for individuals, organisations and groups to lay claim to promoting community development but with very different understandings of what their practice means. The results, as quotes in previous sections reveal, is an experience of the work that is “messy”, “confusing”, and governed by “trial and error”. Thus a broad spectrum of roles is justified as being “community development” but the end result may bear little resemblance to the practice of community development.

Significantly, Toomey (2009) notes that the act of defining community development roles is often undertaken by an institution or organisation located outside of the “boundaries” of the specified community and that these roles are further subjected to the continual changing landscape of development theory and practice. To this Webber and Jones (2013) add that organisations, institutions and practitioners also hold different perspectives and understandings about the roles and achievements of community development.

Although community development workers share similar dilemmas to other colleagues in the public sector (see for example Lipsky, 2010) they also confront the dilemma of being employed by the state while questioning the authority of the state, as *the* authoritative voice (Hoggett, Mayo & Miller,

2009). Thus the practitioner is often in “the paradoxical position of challenging but also representing ‘the authorities’, while also being someone who works to enable others to take up their own authority” (Hoggett, Mayo & Miller, 2009, p.33). We observed that CDOs played an advocacy role on behalf of council. This approach was supported the CDEI literature which promoted effective community engagement as “ensur[ing] that you will be able to advocate and provide strategic advice to support Council to make the best decision for the entire region ... ” (LGAQ, 2011, p. 15). It is therefore unsurprising that CDOs employed a form of advocacy that supported rather than critiqued government.

At the same time, CDOs reported they felt constrained by the lack of formal and sanctioned vehicles for collaboration. Attempts to self-advocate were discouraged by program management as the following CDO reported,

Then there was an uproar and we were all told we weren’t allowed to communicate with each other as a block. [P18]

So the work of the CDEI practitioners was not so much directed at those located on the fringes of communities. Rather their role was interpreted as developing horizontal relationships that advocated *on behalf* of the state and local governments for the greater common good of the majority. Using the Toomey model we would argue that the CDO role executed through the CDEI was a hybrid of traditional and alternative roles. While the processes adopted by the CDOs were drew upon a community development framework the results driven nature of the CDEI created an outputs versus an outcomes framework, characterised by vertical constraints (see Westoby and Owen, 2009).

What the normative definitions of the CDO role omit, is the political agenda contained within the idea of “to work with, not against Council” (LGAQ, 2011b, p. 11). Yet the nature of community development is historically one of challenging structural constraints and issues of power – a role clearly not always in government’s interest. So while CDOs supported the idea of being a “facilitator” or “supporter” it may be that these became the only roles available to them in a constrained environment. Yet these roles are further confused by the contradictory roles that government took. Government positioned itself as a rescuer, assuming responsibility for the recovery of disaster-affected communities, while simultaneously liberating them in order to achieve individual and community self-reliance.

Right from the start, configurations of contestations were established around a range of identifications of community development, which were embodied in several overlapping trajectories. Because CDOs negotiated their role as the interface between local government and the community, they lost sight of their own capacity to challenge organisational structures. In other words, they maintained a balance of power at the local government level while also delivering key federal and state government disaster management messages. What was missing was the mobilisation of community for action and assumption of a more politically active role. Perhaps, more importantly, in doing so, they lost the empowering capacity of the role. This was observed not only externally within the community (for example, limited capacity for advocacy) but internally as well, including limited capacity for self-advocacy and organisation AS a community of workers.

Given that the overarching aim of the government funded CDEI was to “enable a strong and self-reliant community by building community ownership and supporting the achievement of community driven initiatives” (LGAQ, 2011b, pp. 10-11) it is not surprising that the concept of self-reliance was a primary focus for the CDO role. However, what was interesting was the degree to which CDOs interpreted self-reliance according to the values of the state. In other words, by performing their work through the lens of disaster management the CDOs assumed and promoted the concepts of resilience and disaster preparedness according to a PPRR framework as opposed to community development frameworks. Upon reflection this is unsurprising given the limited formal training of CDOs in community development (see Section 4.1). In the absence of a personal practice framework, the PPRR provided CDOs with a means to organise their work. But in doing so it became inevitable that community development would therefore be co-opted for this agenda and thus create additional tensions for CDOs.

As Kenny (1996) observes, community development may be conceptualized as a philosophical approach; a form of political activism (often operating outside paid employment); or as part of the community services industry. The CDEI clearly operationalised community development as a community service, with little regard for the philosophical orientation, program legitimacy and potential activist role. And again, without training and a framework to guide them, the CDOs tended to adopt this approach. This construction of community development as service also helps to explain a particularly strong theme emerging from the interview data. As CDOs attempted to promote the message of self-reliance, they also wondered about a simultaneous generation of dependency on government.

And I tell you the other thing that we're all striking is ... the negative effect of the learned helplessness in the nanny state. This was the country where people used a bit of wire, this is the country that produced the Rats of Tobruk because they were sufficiently creative and innovative and flexible in their thinking to dig holes. This is the country now where people say 'Well you didn't tell me I couldn't build [there].' [P3]

Some stakeholders also shared this concern, with one respondent noting the difference between American and Queensland Government responses to natural disasters:

When the storm [Superstorm July, 2012] struck New York earlier this year I remember hearing the message 'You are on your own, please do not rely on government to save you' – or words to that effect. Whereas we turned into the complete nanny state, and you know the 'You're not insured, that's ok, we'll give you...' [P22]

The same stakeholder also observed the discrepancy between what government delivers through stated policy responses and the action taken by government. In other words ambiguity exists between the government rhetoric of self-reliance and that same government acting as rescuer:

I can understand why government went there but I think it bred a culture of entitlement and you know the government didn't even want to close the community recovery centres even though nobody was coming and it was like eight months after. They were too frightened to close it because of the whole election thing. But I think it bred a [message of] government as a rescuer, so I think the resilience thing is interesting because of the different messages. You don't have to have insurance because you can still get a whole lot of money from us. [P22]

Other stakeholders shared a similar perspective of government acting as rescuer:

We tell them [community] what we want them to do. Yet we want them to be resilient so if people are saying 'The community is still looking for answers from us, we need them to be resilient but they're still looking to us for answers' because that's the way I think they want it. Because in order to have it that way means there's still a control factor in it. We're directing them and taking away their decision making process for them but outside of the disaster we want them to make all the decisions, so it's a mixed message. [P26]

The confusion generated by these mixed messages in community was expressed well by one CDO who said,

[Government] want to save with one hand: 'Sit down and shut up and do what we tell you'. On the other hand, 'We want you to start thinking for yourself'. So make up your mind which do you want? Do you want us to sit down and shut up or think for ourselves? [P3]

The program's aim of achieving self-reliance appeared at the outset to be compatible with the notion of "empowerment". However, our analysis suggests that the CDO role was also utilised as an instrument of the state to dismantle the culture of entitlement generated by government.

I envisage that the era on having such a heavy reliance on government to do everything for you is over and it's about retraining our communities to make sure that they use strong networking and identifying what skills they do have because a lot of that goes unsaid and unrecognised. Ideally, in a community you'd like them to be self-sufficient to a degree and build on each other's knowledge and skills. [P12]

CDOs found that self-reliance translated to fostering disaster preparedness and resilience in communities which generated value conflicts about bringing community development work into alignment with state values/requirements. This created a particular dilemma for the CDOs who found that the principle of empowerment needed to be re-interpreted and practiced as non-reliance on government, rather than "to increase the power of the disadvantaged" (Ife, 2013, p. 63).

You want the community to know where to turn to for help but really to help themselves not sit back and wait for help to come to them. [P4]

However, there were also tensions within this approach as other CDOs worried that their role was contributing to community disempowerment.

What used to happen when there was a flood was people used to stay in their houses and the able-bodied people would go from house to house making sure everyone was ok. Now everyone has to be evacuated, so there is that resentment 'Look mate we've been flooded for a hundred years and suddenly it's going to be different.' And that's the feeling and you've disempowered the people to a degree. [P10]

We found that some people as a result of the assistance given to them had become less resilient. They're more inclined now to sit back and wait for any help to come to them. We're trying to work out how do we overcome that? How do we give these people the help

without making them so dependent that they can't move forward and initiate anything for themselves? [P4]

The same CDO also highlighted the impact service providers had on building community resilience as,

We've got an influx of service providers that we're kind of making the community dependent on but by the same token we're trying to build resilience. I found that we're building a less resilient community as a result of it. [P4]

Thus practitioners risk enacting certain development roles which may have disempowering results (Toomey, 2009). Not only does the space between models/roles contain "ambiguities and contradiction" for practitioners, but there is the added tension between practitioner's personal actions of "doing what they have been sent to do and what they feel is right" (Toomey, 2009, p. 183). This raises an ethical dilemma; one that requires a worker to make a "moral judgment about what is the 'right' way to behave in a certain situation" (Tesoriero, 2010, p.285).

Our analysis revealed there was a significant disconnect between the rhetoric of government disaster policy that promotes a culture of entitlement and dependence that is at odds with the concurrent practice of self-reliance. Linking the CDEI program to disaster management responses as articulated through a PPRR (prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover) framework found some CDOs performing their work through the lens of disaster management by assigning themselves the roles of a policy "enforcer" and "liberator". This created an ambiguous space in which CDOs encountered value positions that conflicted or were different to the principles they understood to incorporate a community development approach. Here Tesoriero (2010) informs our analysis by noting that the value positions of community development practitioners can be modified when they intersect with the work values which "come with the job" and that these values may also be in opposition to community work values. We wondered how the CDOs determined the balance between their stated position values of empowerment and capacity building with the work values of the CDEI and its location within a disaster management framework, the structural arrangements of local government and the contradictory messaging about self-reliance they were required to embody. There are questions about whether the CDEI was at odds with what the CDOs actually found themselves capable of achieving. Such moral uncertainty creates an ethical dilemma about how community development workers understand and practice their own agency and may in part explain why the CDEI workers did not adopt a greater activist stance.

Tesoriero (2010) observes that community development programs are often established on the basis that they will not "rock the boat", serving instead as mechanisms for "reinforcing the existing order" (p. 287). Additionally, Tesoriero (2010) argues that explicit and implicit constraints placed on community development programs are more likely to occur when governments are involved in the running and funding of such programs. For the CDEI, the funding guidelines determined the face of recovery, resilience and disaster preparedness. While this is not inappropriate within the context of a government program, it creates an interesting challenge for the emerging field of survivor development (Ife, 2013).

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Findings

Despite Australians well-known resilience to hardship and their ability to face adversity the increasing frequency, severity and scale of weather-related disasters (Goode et al, 2013; Vidal, 2011) means natural disasters will continue to have a significant impact on Australian communities, the economy and environment.

As this report has discussed, Australian disaster management arrangements are increasingly informed by international disaster management trends which have shaped and broadened the PPRR framework to give disaster management policy writing and practice a more contemporary approach. The evolution of disaster management within Australia over the past 40 years has witnessed a shift from an internal agency focus to a community focus informed by the benefits of risk management practices; reduced vulnerability; increased resilience and engaged stakeholders outside emergency management to promote safety and sustainability (AGD, 2004; Gabriel, 2002). Of greatest significance to this report is the increasing recognition of the role of community members in actively contributing to their own disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. As detailed in Section 5, an appreciative analysis of funded state community development officers reveals a significant contribution in enacting this policy shift and building capacity for future resilience from subsequent disasters.

Any generalisation from these findings is accompanied by a cautionary note given the diversity of CDO experiences. While decentralisation of a program suggests potential to respond more appropriately to community needs, this was mediated by both agency and structure. Among the CDOs there was enormous variability in prior experience and training in community development, disaster management and government bureaucracy. Familiarity with the community and existence of networks differed greatly. Such variability was further mediated by structural factors such as the centralisation of program management in an urban environment. This was accompanied by the physical and structural location of the role (the CDEI was the pilot project of Queensland's first activation of the NDRRA Category C – Community Recovery Fund which also came attached with sizeable funding), reporting demands, lines of accountability, and competing and sometimes contradictory policy objectives.

This report also argues that the roles of the CDOs were guided and interpreted through a broader managerialist discourse. In this space, disaster management strategies, frameworks and strategic plans are practiced and promoted through a neo-liberal government understanding of risk management, resilience, self-reliance and sustainability. This is not mere background information, but works to fundamentally shift and shape the role of the CDOs working in this context and its impact cannot be underestimated. The result was a concentration on transactional roles (completing projects) at the expense of the more valuable but less easily measurable transformational work (changing structures of relationship, for example, between community members and government).

That such good work occurred in this context is testament to the ingenuity, creativity and resilience of the CDOs themselves. It is interesting to think what else might have been possible had the program been shaped more strategically and with better supports at all levels. To this end, we

conclude with a series of key points and recommendations for the integration of community development within future disaster responses.

7.2 Policy recommendations

Recommendation 1: Recognising that disaster will be an ongoing part of the modern age the first recommendation is that CDOs should be supported to be in communities on a fulltime basis, as opposed to simply value adding to crisis response. Here we refer to the work of Caniglia and Trotman (2011). They argue that building community capacity before the event ensures a good understanding of community issues, and enables many locality based responses to emerge quickly in the immediate aftermath of an event.

Recommendation 2: The second recommendation is for greater funding flexibility at all program levels; there needs to more responsiveness through Category C of the NDRRA. Further to this we would support the extension of community development program time frames, the possible redirection of funding to new disaster events, and greater discretion for local government in determining how surplus/unspent funding could be redirected.

7.3 Recommendations for program design and implementation

Recommendation 3: The theme of overwhelming lines and means of accountability was one of the clearest themes to emerge from the research. We therefore recommend reasonable and useful and meaningful reporting expectations to ensure that accountability is not driving the program. To this we would add the need for the implementation of longitudinal studies to capture long-term benefits and impacts of community development in the disaster space.

Recommendation 4: We suggest the adoption of an action learning framework to drive the program design and development. A rigorous and well-facilitated action learning approach¹⁷ would assist in addressing concerns about training, relevant tools, and reporting. Such an approach would potentially have reduced CDO resistance and helped build collaboration between the CDOs and project management.

Recommendation 5: Recognising the particularly challenging environment, the complex nature of community development work and the significant challenges posed by remote and rural contexts, there is need for professional supervision focused specifically on community development (as distinct from a generic EAP (Employment Assistance Program)).

Recommendation 6: For the CDOs we encourage actions that affirm a sense of agency and solidarity. There is need for practitioners to identify and connect with a community of practice outside of their immediate employment context. For example, we recommend joining state and international community development organisations and attending their training workshops and conferences. This would build community development networks and affirm CDOs in their practice. Such a response is possible at the individual level and does not require external approval or coordination. However, this also requires a shift in mindset about what constitutes personal support. For the individual it is about having a clear practice framework, creating the networks they need and having heightened consciousness of their own agency. Only then will practitioners be able to employ

¹⁷ See for example, <http://www.aral.com.au/>

community development methodology both internally AND externally in the creation of a community of practice.

Recommendation 7: To ensure councils are provided with clear guidelines at the outset of the program defining council's role and responsibilities in relation to the CDO position. We also note the need for a clearly defined CDO exit strategy that incorporates ongoing and active council participation in partnering with and connecting to service providers and community organisations to enhance community disaster preparedness and capacity building.

7.4 Practice recommendations

Recommendation 8: Given the complex and highly contested context in which CDOs were operating, the absence of experience and/or training in community development was problematic. We would say a lived experience of disaster and community are valuable but on their own are not sufficient. Additional skill sets are vital to the work. It is therefore also important that CDO recruitment processes be conducted by people with a deep understanding of community development.

7.5 Some final thoughts

This report is both deliberately appreciative and critical of the work carried out, in an effort to deepen thinking about the role of community development in responses to natural disasters. We wish to finish this discussion with a return to the shared human experience that underpins the more scholarly debates. We conclude with an acknowledgement of the commitment, courage, ingenuity and adaptive capacity of both the CDOs and disaster affected people throughout Queensland. We are grateful to them for sharing their experiences.

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