DISABILITY INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY PLANNING
(DIEP)FORUM

YARRA RANGES DIEP FORUM

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

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“This person said their main concern was where people were significantly isolated. Where they may not have neighbours, or they may be living alone. And their question was who do they call? What do we do for those people? Particularly when there's no power or phone reception.”

PURPOSE

This report documents learnings from a facilitated Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning (DIEP) forum in the Local Government Area (LGA) where it was hosted. Invitation to participate was extended to stakeholders from the community, health, disability, advocacy, emergency services, and government sectors.

THIS DIEP FORUM WAS HOSTED BY YARRA RANGES COUNCIL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Date: 26 October 2022

Location: Yarra Ranges Council

The focus of the DIEP forum was on learning together about:

- *ways we can work together to ensure people with disability are aware, safe, and prepared for emergencies triggered by natural hazards and other emergencies (e.g., house fire, pandemic).*
- *actions we can take to make sure people and their support needs are at the centre of emergency management planning.*
- *barriers and enablers to the inclusion of people with disability before, during, and after disasters.*

This report is one part of a larger program of partnership research to develop Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) policies and practices in Australia.

Findings, reported here, contribute multi-stakeholder understanding about knowledge, resources, and possibilities for developing Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) policies and practice at the local community level.

Findings in this report are unique to the LGA where the DIEP forum was hosted. It can inform critical reflection and action-oriented planning for ongoing development of inclusive local emergency management and disaster recovery practices that leave nobody behind.

INTRODUCTION

For too long, disability has been kept in the *"too hard basket"* because government and emergency services have not had the methods, tools, and guidance on how to include people with disability[1].

When it comes to disaster risk reduction, people with disability have been overlooked in research, practice, and policy development. A growing literature reveals that people with disability are among the most neglected during disaster events. A key barrier to their safety and well-being in emergencies has been the absence of people with disability from local emergency management practices and policy formulation.

The research shows that people with disability:

- are two to four times more likely to die in a disaster than the general population[2].
- experience higher risk of injury and loss of property[3].
- experience greater difficulty with evacuation[4] and sheltering[5].
- require more intensive health and social services during and after disasters[6].

Stigma and discrimination marginalise people with disability from mainstream social, economic, cultural, and civic participation, including participation in emergency management decision-making.

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[1] Villeneuve, M. (2021). *Issues Paper: Clearing a path to full inclusion of people with disability in emergency management policy and practice in Australia*. Centre for Disability Research and Policy. The University of Sydney, NSW, 2006. http://www.daru.org.au/resource/clearing-a-path-to-full-inclusion-of-people-with-disability-in-emergency-management-policy-and-practice-in-australia. Multiple formats including: pdf, word, Easy Read, infographic, video animation.

[2] Fujii, K. (2015) The Great East Japan Earthquake and Persons with Disabilities Affected by the Earthquake – Why is the Mortality Rate so High? Interim report on JDF Support Activities and Proposals. Paper presented at the Report on the Great East Japan Earthquake and Support for People with Disabilities, Japan Disability Forum.

[3] Alexander, D. (2012). Models of social vulnerability to disasters. *RCCS Annual Review. A selection from the Portuguese journal Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*(4).

[4] Malpass, A., West, C., Quaill, J., & Barker, R. (2019). Experiences of individuals with disabilities sheltering during natural disasters: An integrative review. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management, The, 34*(2), 60-65.

[5] Twigg, J., Kett, M., Bottomley, H., Tan, L. T., & Nasreddin, H. (2011). Disability and public shelter in emergencies. *Environmental hazards, 10*(3-4), 248-261. doi:10.1080/17477891.2011.594492

[6] Phibbs, S., Good, G., Severinsen, C., Woodbury, E., & Williamson, K. (2015). Emergency preparedness and perceptions of vulnerability among disabled people following the Christchurch earthquakes: Applying lessons learnt to the Hyogo Framework for Action. *Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies, 19*, 37

Multiple categories of social vulnerability intersect with disability which amplifies risk[7].

INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Disability became prominent in the disaster policy agenda after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) entered into force in 2008.

- Article 11 of the UNCRPD requires nations to take all necessary measures to protect the safety of persons with disability in situations of risk, including disasters triggered by natural hazard events**.**
- The UNCRPD also reinforces the right of people with disability to have equal access to programs and services that all citizens enjoy. This includes emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction programs and services.

Built on the foundations of the UNCRPD, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) (2015-2030) firmly established people with disability and their representative organisations as legitimate stakeholders in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction policies, calling for "a more people-centred preventative approach to disaster risk" (p.5)[8].

People-centred approaches place people and their needs at the centre of responsive disaster management and also position them as the main agents of development and change[9].

Australia, as a signatory to the UNCRPD and SFDRR must find ways to ensure everyone is well prepared for disasters triggered by natural hazards. This includes people with disability and their support networks.

NATIONAL POLICY

Australia's state/territory governments have principal responsibility for emergency management legislation, policies, and frameworks.

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[7] Twigg, J., Kett, M., & Lovell, E. (2018). Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction. *Briefing Note. London: Overseas Development Institute*.

[8] Stough, L.M. & Kang, D. (2015). The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and persons with disabilities, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science, 6*, 140 – 149. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13753-015-0051-8

[9] Villeneuve, M. (2021). Building a Roadmap for Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in Australian Communities. *Progress in Disaster Science*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2021.100166

Australia's national strategy, frameworks, and principles guide how emergency response is scaled. It is underpinned by partnerships that require government, emergency services, NGOs, community groups, emergency management and volunteer organisations to work together[10].

Australia's National Strategy for Disaster Resilience and National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework invite shared responsibility with individuals and communities to help everyone plan for and respond better to disasters. But we haven't had the tools to include people with disability and the services that support them in emergency preparedness and disaster recovery planning.

> Research in Australia, led by the University of Sydney, is helping to address that gap. This research has influenced the development of Australia's new Disability Strategy through the co-production of person-centred capability tools and approaches that support multiple stakeholders to work together to identify and remove barriers to the safety and well-being of people with disability in emergencies.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31 includes, for the first time, targeted action on disability-inclusive emergency management and disaster recovery planning. This is significant because it requires all governments, community organisations, and businesses to include people with disability in their emergency management and disaster response and recovery planning.

This means that:

- everyone must find effective ways to include the voice and perspective of people with disability **in planning and decision-making** to increase the health, safety, and well-being of people with disability before, during, and after disasters.
- emergency and recovery planning should **include the services that support people with disability as a local community asset** for emergency planning and recovery. Planning for emergencies must extend to working with disability service providers to help them to understand their disaster risks and make effective plans for their services, staff, and the people they support.
- government and emergency services need to **find ways to work in partnership with people with disability and the services that support** them – because disability-inclusive

[10] https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-australian-emergency-management-arrangements/

emergency planning and disaster recovery require collaborative effort!

Local emergency management plans need to identify and plan for the extra support needs of people with disability in emergencies. Local Government (local level) emergency plans direct the:

- actions of emergency services agencies, emergent groups (e.g., spontaneous volunteers); and
- use of local resources (e.g., emergency management NGOs) to help with emergency response, incident management support, relief, and recovery.

Coordination at the regional level may be needed to ensure the response is effective and tailored to the situation and nature of the emergency (e.g., bushfire vs flood). When the scale or intensity of the emergency increases:

- State/territory arrangements may be activated to provide support and resources locally.
- Inter-state/territory may be activated for additional assistance
- National emergency management arrangements are also in place when assistance exceeds the capability of the state/territory to respond.
- National coordination may also occur in times of catastrophic disaster, national or global disaster (e.g., pandemic), and when international assistance has been offered.

To ensure inclusion, emergency management, governments and emergency planners (at all levels) need to understand the support needs of people with disability, review current plans, and develop community assets and contingencies that are better matched to the support needs of people with disability at all stages of disaster management (preparedness, response, recovery).

Interdependence of people with disability and the services that support them.

Research has recognised the interdependence of people with disability and their support networks in achieving safety and well-being before, during, and after disaster. This literature acknowledges the important contribution of community, health and disability service providers to:

- enabling preparedness with the people they support and
- leveraging their routine roles and responsibilities to build local community resilience to disaster.

These services are optimally positioned to contribute to inclusive emergency planning and risk reduction because:

- they are on the frontline of community-based care and support.
- these relationships equip providers with an intimate knowledge of the functional needs of the people they support.
- they have a deep understanding of the accessible spaces and places within communities that promote and enable participation.
- community-based providers are often seen as the link between people with disabilities and their families and the wider community, forming a crucial component of support networks.

Research in Australia shows, however, that community and disability organisations are not adequately prepared for disaster themselves nor are they integrated into emergency planning**.**

The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission signed a legislative amendment that took effect in January 2022. It requires all National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Registered service providers to:

- ensure continuity of supports which are critical to the safety, health, and wellbeing of NDIS participants before, during, and after a disaster, and
- work with their clients to undertake risk assessments and include preparedness strategies within their individual support plans.

The NDIS Practice Standards incorporate these legislated requirements. The new Practice Standards now require service providers to effectively develop, test, and review emergency plans, and to plan for the continuity of critical supports during emergencies to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the people they support.

Emergency planning is also a requirement for aged care providers. During an emergency, providers must continue to maintain quality care and services to care recipients. This is a requirement under the Aged Care Act 1997.

Although this requirement has been part of Aged Care legislation since 1977, **this is a new role for ALL service providers who have** not traditionally been included in emergency planning policy and practices**.**

DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DIDRR)

The Collaborating4Inclusion research team at The University of Sydney Impact Centre for Disability Research and Policy leads partnership research to co-produce methods, tools, and policy guidance for cross-sector collaborative action on Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR).

Our research focuses on community capacity development in the areas of **Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP)** and **Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning (DIEP)** to activate cross-sector collaboration to achieve DIDRR[11,12]. By learning and working together, our aim is to build the community capacity needed to take disability out of the *"too hard basket."*

DIDRR is an emerging cross-sector practice requiring social innovation to develop responsive disaster risk reduction practices that focus on the support needs of people with disability in emergencies and that place people with disability at the centre of development and change. DIDRR approaches seek to identify and address the root causes of vulnerability for people with disability in emergencies through participatory and community-based approaches that engage all persons.

DIDRR requires actions of multiple stakeholders working together with people with disability to identify and remove barriers to the safety and well-being of people with disability before, during, and after disasters.

P-CEP activates capability-focused self-assessment and preparedness actions of multiple stakeholders to enable personal emergency preparedness tailored to individual support needs; resulting in the identification of and planning for unmet needs that increase disaster risks. Certificate training in P-CEP facilitation is available through the University of Sydney Centre for Continuing Education. Learn more here: https://collaborating4inclusion.org/leave-nobody-behind/pcep-short-course/

DIEP activates inclusive community-led preparedness actions of multiple stakeholders that focus on pre-planning for the extra

[11] Villeneuve, M. (2022). Disability inclusive emergency planning: Person-centred emergency preparedness. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Global Public Health*. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190632366.013.343

[12] Villeneuve, M. (2021). Building a Roadmap for Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in Australian Communities. *Progress in Disaster Science*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2021.100166

support needs of people with disability in emergencies and building community willingness and capability to share responsibility for the organization and delivery of supports, so that nobody is left behind.

Learn more: www.collaborating4inclusion.org

Developing Shared Responsibility for DIDRR at the local community level

Our partnership research presumes that stakeholders must learn and work together toward DIDRR development and change. The DIEP forum was designed to support that objective. The following provides a brief overview of key stakeholders in terms of their potential to contribute to DIDRR.

Emergency services personnel include paramedics, firefighters, police officers, state emergency services workers. These personnel, who work alongside numerous emergency volunteers[13], are usually the first support people think they will rely on in a disaster. Indeed, emergency services and other agencies are typically the first organized to respond. This includes issuing information and warnings for hazards (e.g., bushfire, flood, storm, cyclone, extreme heat, severe weather)[14].

Community engagement is a critical component of emergency management practice which helps to build community resilience to disasters[15]. Before emergencies, community engagement activities typically involve providing awareness campaigns, information, tools and resources that enable people to understand their disaster risks and take preparedness steps. To be included, people with disability need the same opportunity to:

- *access, understand and use this information,*
- *participate in emergency preparedness programs in their community, and*
- *be included as a valuable stakeholder in all phases of local community disaster risk management[16].*

Local Council links to community groups are a fundamental vehicle for the delivery of measures to increase inclusion for people with

[13] Varker,T., Metcalf, O., et al., (2018). Research into Australian emergency services personnel mental health and wellbeing: An evidence map. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 52*, 129 - 148 https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867417738054
[14] https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/australian-warning-system/
[15] https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-community-engagement/
[16] Pertiwi, P.P., Llewellyn, G.L., Villeneuve, M. (2020). Disability representation in Indonesian Disaster Risk Reduction Frameworks. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2019.101454

disability and the services that support them and build whole-of-community resilience before, during and after disaster.

In addition to their emergency management function, local councils are linked to emergency services, Organisations of People with Disability (OPDs), and community-based service providers through their community development, disability inclusion and community engagement roles. However, there is wide variability and ineffective integration of these critical responsibilities of local government[17]. This impacts local emergency management and disaster recovery planning and perpetuates inequity for people with disability, their family and carers because their support needs in emergency situations are not understood.

DIDRR requires development of leadership, support, and coordination functions within local government for working together with OPDs, community service and disability support providers, and emergency services. Integrated planning and reporting across the community development and emergency management functions of local councils is needed to achieve safety and well-being for people with disability, their family and carers in emergencies.

Organisations of People with Disability (OPDs) and Disability Advocacy Organisations can play a significant role in disaster policy, planning and interventions. Through their lived experience, leadership, and roles as disability advocates, OPDs represent the voice and perspective of their members with disability. OPDs have in-depth understanding of the factors that increase risk for people with disability in emergencies. They also have access to informal networks of support and communication. This information is not readily available within mainstream emergency management. Listening to people with disability and learning about their experiences is essential to understanding and removing the barriers that increase vulnerability in disasters. Disability Advocacy organisations and OPDs play a critical role in supporting and representing the voice and perspectives of people with disability.

Carers (e.g., family and other unpaid support people) face the same barriers as the individuals they care for in emergencies. Like OPDs, **Carer Organisations** can play a significant role in safety and well-being outcomes for people with disability and their carers by representing their perspective in disaster policy, planning and interventions.

[17] Drennan, L. & Morrissey, L. (2019). Resilience policy in practice – surveying the role of community-based organisations in local disaster management. *Local Government Studies, 45*(3), 328-349. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/03003930.2018.1541795

Community, health and disability service providers (e.g., paid service providers and volunteers) are an untapped local community asset with potential to increase safety and well-being for people with disability in emergencies. Harnessing this potential is a complex challenge. It requires:

- developing effective links between personal emergency preparedness of people with disability and organisational preparedness (including service continuity) of the services that support them.
- understanding how such requirements could be developed and governed within the diverse service delivery context, funding models, and roles of service providers in the community, health care and disability sectors.

In this landscape, some people receive disability supports from multiple service providers and agencies, while other people are not connected to funded disability services (e.g., NDIS) but may receive support through mainstream community groups and activities. The situation is increasingly complex for people who have limited or no support networks, fewer people they rely on and trust, and fragile connections to community programs and neighbourhood centres[18].

New ways of working are needed to ensure duty of care for both the staff and the people they support. This will require clarity on the responsibilities and expectations of service providers and the people they support in emergencies. This should include both specialist disability supports and mainstream community services for people of all ages.

STUDY CONTEXT

The municipality of Yarra Ranges is located on metropolitan Melbourne's eastern fringe extending into the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges. Comprised of nearly 2,500 square kilometres, the shire stretches from the densely populated outer suburbs of Melbourne to the forested areas of the Great Dividing Ranges. Home to a population nearly 160,000, it is Victoria's largest area of any metropolitan council. There are more than 55 suburbs,

[18] Villeneuve, M., Abson, L., Pertiwi, P., Moss, M. (2021). Applying a person-centred capability framework to inform targeted action on disability inclusive disaster risk reduction. International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101979

townships, small communities, and rural areas. About 70% of the population live in rural areas. The main suburbs include Healesville, Yarra Junction, Belgrave, Lilydale and Warburton. Disaster risks include bushfire, flood and storms. With relatively low level of cultural and linguistic diversity, the top five ancestries are English, Australian, Irish, Scottish, and German. Over 94% speak only English or speak English well or very well. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Yarra Ranges have relatively low social disadvantage compared with the national average. However, there are contrasts within the municipality. Areas such as Kallista and Belgrave Heights score significantly below the national average for social disadvantage. In contrast areas such as Warburton, Yarra Junction, Millgrove and Wesburn have levels of disadvantage that are higher than the national average.

Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP)

The Yarra Ranges MEMP lists a range of significant emergencies that have occurred since the beginning of the twentieth century including bushfire, heatwaves, floods, storms, landslides, light plane crashes, road crashes on major highways, and outbreaks of infectious disease.

The MEMP acknowledges the importance of recognising the needs of vulnerable people as an important part of emergency planning so that appropriate activities can take place before (e.g., pre-planning for their particular circumstances), during (e.g., knowledge of individuals and key sites can be used to inform evacuation planning) and after an emergency (e.g., to develop more inclusive and responsive recovery programs).

In the Yarra Ranges MEMP, “disability” is mentioned twice. Once on a list of vulnerability factors (p. 17) and in the Section 10.2 on Sector Wide Partnerships where the Disability Advisory Committee is listed along with other council committees.

In the MEMP, people with disability are included alongside a number of other groups and factors that increase vulnerability to disaster. Their specific support needs are not directly addressed. The *strategies* stated in the MEMP for planning for "vulnerable people" at a municipal level reportedly begins with:

- *identification of vulnerability factors,*
- *the location of vulnerable people and communities, and*
- *building relationships with local, community-based service providers working with key groups on a day-to-day basis (p. 16)*

Yarra Ranges Council maintains a list of *"facilities where vulnerable persons may be".* This is stored within the Councils document management system and a copy is in a databased called, *"Crisisworks".*

A VPR is maintained as part of the MEMP to assist incident controllers and Victoria Police to aid response and evacuation planning. Set up in accordance with Victoria Government guidelines and validated twice annually, access to the VPR is restricted to Victoria Police. The VPR contains details of agencies that work with vulnerable people. This list of agencies is accessible to local Council.

The MEMP states that Yarra Ranges is connected to a range of networks and organisations who provide services to vulnerable individuals and groups on a regular basis, and who can provide a ready source of information and intelligence on needs relevant to emergency related activities. Examples provided in the MEMP include Councils, Maternal and Child Health Services, Emergency Relief Provider Network, and Homelessness Network. Council staff can access the details of the services listed via a Community Contact Directory located in the Crisisworks Library.

The MEMP states that sector-wide partnerships support engagement programs to be inclusive of those at risk in emergencies, noting that, *"it is likely these groups would play a role providing advice on impacts and needs relevant to their sector as a conduit for information and/or input into relevant events and activities."* The

Disability Advisory Committee was identified as one of these established networks.

METHODOLOGY

Design

We adapted the **Structured Interview Matrix** (SIM) methodology as an innovative approach to disability-inclusive community engagement with multiple stakeholders.

Inclusive community engagement is a crucial first step in redressing the exclusion of people with disability from emergency planning. It breaks down professional boundaries so that people can learn and work together to identify local community assets, tools, and resources that will impact whole-of-community resilience to disaster.

Here's how we do it:

The academic research team partners with Local Government to host a Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning (DIEP) forum in their community.

As host, Local Government partners invite multiple stakeholder participation, striving for equal representation of:

- *people with disability, (informal) carers, and representatives and advocates;*
- *community, health, and disability organisations that provide community-based services and supports;*
- *mainstream emergency services including non-government organisations involved in community resilience and disaster recovery work; and*
- *government staff with diverse roles involving emergency management, disability access & inclusion, community development & engagement.*

The research team pre-plans the forum together with the local government host who promote the forum through their networks. To support interactive dialogue, we aim to recruit 32 participants.

The makeup of participants in each DIEP forum reflects the nature of the Local Government's connections to their community as well as the availability, willingness, and capability of participants to attend. Participation can be impacted by other factors including

competing demands on one or more stakeholder group and unexpected events that impact attendance of individuals (such as illness) or an entire sector (such as community-level emergencies).

Data Collection

Originally developed as a method for organisational analysis and strategic planning, the Structured Interview Matrix facilitation technique has been used as a data collection method in participatory research.

The SIM methodology was adapted in this study facilitate inclusive community engagement and promote the development of knowledge and connections between different stakeholders.

SIM employs a graded approach to collaboration. We applied the SIM using a three-phase process.

Overview of the SIM Facilitation Process

The first phase involves a series of one-on-one interviews conducted by the participants themselves. An interview guide, prepared by the researchers, consists of four questions. On arrival, participants are assigned to a group and each group is assigned one interview question. The interview matrix is structured so that each participant has the opportunity to ask their assigned question of three people and respond to a question posed by three other participants.

Participant interviewers are instructed to ask their question and listen to the response without interrupting. They are also asked to record responses in writing on a form provided.

To support dialogue between participants, pairs take turns asking their interview question over a 10-minute duration. Additional time is provided for participants who needed more time to move between interviews or who require more time to communicate or record responses. The process is repeated until each participant has interviewed one person from each of the other groups. The facilitator keeps time and guides the group so that participants know how to proceed through the matrix.

To extend opportunity for interaction and dialogue, we add a fourth "wildcard" round whereby participants are asked to conduct one more interview with someone they do not know, who they haven't yet interviewed, and who is not in their "home group."

The second phase involves each group coming together to discuss, review and summarise the individual responses to their assigned question. Following their summary of responses, group members are encouraged to add their perspective to the small group deliberation.

The small group discussion involves information sharing and deliberation, where participants assimilate information provided by others, express their viewpoint, develop shared understanding, and potential solutions.

To prepare a synthesis of findings to their question, each small group is invited to identify the main findings to be shared in the large group plenary. Each of these small group discussions are audio recorded.

The third phase involves a large group plenary discussion which begins with each group presenting their main findings followed by a facilitated discussion with all participants. The presentations and plenary discussion are audio recorded.

Interview Questions Guiding this DIEP forum

Group 1: From bushfires to COVID-19 to floods, Australia has had its share of disaster events. How have disasters impacted you, your organization, and the people you support? Probe: What worked well? What helped that to happen?

Group 2: We all need to prepare for emergencies and disasters triggered by natural hazards. What steps have you taken to prepare

for emergencies? Probe: If you have, tell me more about your plan. If you haven't what could you do? Is there anyone who could help you get started?

Group 3: In a disaster in your community, some people with disability will have extra support needs that impacts how they manage in an emergency. How do you or your organization enable people with disability to be aware, safe, and prepared before, during, and after emergencies? Probe: What resources, tools, training helps you? What resources, tools, training are needed?

Group 4: Emergency services is usually the first support people think they will rely on in a disaster. In a disaster in your community, what OTHER SUPPORTS could people with disability count on? Probe: Think about where you live, work, and play and the assets near you.

Facilitation Process

The interview matrix technique has the advantage of accommodating the voices of a large number of participants in each session (12 - 40) while ensuring that the perspectives of all participants are heard. This approach overcomes common challenges to inclusive community engagement by ensuring that people can fully engage in the process and benefit from their participation while maintaining efficiency.

The DIEP forum brought together diverse stakeholders who do not typically work together. Inclusion of people with disability was supported by: (a) extending invitations to people with disability and their representatives to participate; (b) welcoming the attendance and participation of support workers; and (c) providing the means to support their engagement (e.g., Auslan interpretation, barrier free meeting spaces, safe space to express ideas, accommodating diverse communication needs, participation support).

Following arrival, participants were assigned to one of four mixed stakeholder groups. A morning orientation provided background information on DIDRR including what it means and the timeline of its development in Australia. It was explained that the focus of the DIEP forum is on learning together about:

- *ways we can work together to ensure people with disability are aware, safe, and prepared for emergencies triggered by natural hazards and other emergencies (e.g., house fire, pandemic).*
- *actions we can take to make sure people and their support needs are at the centre of emergency management planning.*

- *barriers and enablers to the inclusion of people with disability before, during, and after disasters.*

Participants were introduced to the Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) framework[19] including a brief case study to illustrate the importance of considering extra support needs of people with disability in terms of functional capabilities and support needs rather than by their impairments, deficits or diagnosis.

The P-CEP covers eight capability areas including communication, management of health, assistive technology, personal support, assistance animals, transportation, living situation, and social connectedness[20]. Introducing the P-CEP framework served the purpose of supporting shared learning among participants, grounded in a common language for identifying and discussing the capabilities of people with disability and any extra support needs they have in emergencies[21]. The remainder of the forum was facilitated according to the three SIM phases.

Each DIEP forum took place over approximately 5 hours including the morning orientation and nutrition breaks. The length of these consultations is important to ensure time invested in meeting new people and engaging in meaningful discussion with people from different backgrounds. This facilitates the development of new community connections and the opportunity to renew or deepen existing relationships[22]. Opportunity for informal networking and engaging in extended discussion during nutrition breaks provides additional opportunities to develop connections between stakeholders.

At the end of the workshop, participants were invited to complete a questionnaire to provide feedback on their satisfaction with the workshop and what key things were learned.

Data Analysis

Data consisted of: (a) scanned record forms from the individual interviews; (b) transcribed audio recordings of the small group

[19] https://collaborating4inclusion.org/home/pcep/

[20] Villeneuve, M. (2022). Disability inclusive emergency planning: Person-centred emergency preparedness. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Global Public Health*. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190632366.013.343

[21] https://collaborating4inclusion.org/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction/p-cep-resource-package/

[22] O'Sullivan, T.L., Corneil, W., Kuziemsky, C.E., & Toal-Sullivan, D (2014). Use of the Structured Interview Matrix to enhance community resilience through collaboration and inclusive engagement. *Systems Research and Behavioural Science,32*, 616-628. https://doi/10.1002/sres.2250

deliberation; and (c) transcribed audio recordings of the large group plenary.

Data were analysed by Local Government Area (LGA) to produce findings that reflect the nature of the conversation in each community.

Analysis proceeded in the following way for each LGA.

- *All recordings were transcribed verbatim and imported into a qualitative analysis software program.*
- *Data was de-identified at time of transcription.*
- *Record forms and transcripts were read in full several times before identifying codes.*
- *Open coding was used to first organise and reduce the data by identifying key ideas coming from participants. This was conducted by two researchers independently followed by discussion of emergent findings with the research team to support reflexive thematic analysis.*
- *Reflexive thematic analysis[23] was used to group codes into categories. This process involves both expansion and collapsing of codes into categories; creation of new categories; identification of patterns in the data; observation of relationships and the development of emergent themes for each LGA.*

Our goal was to provide a rich, thematic description of the entire data set and report on findings for each LGA that reflects the contributions of everyone who participated in the forum (i.e., this report).

Since this is an under-researched area and the consultations involved multiple stakeholder perspectives, our aim, here, is to identify predominant themes and give voice to the multiplicity of perspectives in each LGA report.

DIEP reports are shared back with our government hosts and all participants to support ongoing feedback and dialogue on disability inclusive emergency planning.

Stakeholders are encouraged to use the report to progress inclusive community engagement and DIDRR actions in their community.

[23] Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

"Transport was a big thing because when something's happening you can't just ring up a taxi and expect them to be there in 15 minutes because that doesn't work. So, a lot of people have had to put a bit of thought into how they're going to get out of where they are, if they need to get out in a hurry."

DIEP Participants

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Person with Disability or Carer	8
Disability Service	4
Community Service	5

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Health Service	0
Organisation or Advocate representing people with disability or carers	1
Government	4
Emergency Service	3
TOTAL	**25**

FINDINGS

What did we learn together?

Findings are grouped into four themes, summarized in the following table and discussed below.

Key Learnings in Yarra Ranges

1.	Community infrastructure was front of mind.
2.	The value of communication and information provision.
3.	The value of supportive relationships
4.	People undertake preparedness activities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Learning 1: Community infrastructure was front of mind.

Community infrastructure was a significant theme that was discussed in Yarra Ranges **with loss of power and telecommunications** and **transport** being the top issues of concern.

Loss of Utilities i.e., power and telecommunication pose significant risk for people.

"The communication, and particularly when you lose power, what happens when you've lost power for a couple of weeks? Which has happened to all of us, pretty much, when we had all the bad storms, et cetera. You can't charge your phones. But not only that, another thing I noticed in the last lot of storms that we had, we had no reception anyway. So, we had no network, we had no nothing. So, you couldn't ring out to anybody anyway" (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"My grandson's got an oximeter at night, and it's only got a backup battery. But you can only charge that so long." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"This person said their main concern was where people were significantly isolated. Where they may not have neighbours, or they may be living alone. And their question was who do they call? What do we do for those people? Particularly when there's no power or phone reception." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"I know in Lilydale there's no one central place where people go in an emergency. Because I remember when we got trapped and we had no access to information whatsoever. We didn't know what was going on. But there was nowhere we could go apart from the police station to say, "What's happening?" (Yarra Ranges_G3)

Preparing and managing power loss. Strategies to mitigate this risk included generators for self and lending to community, identifying community assets that had power supply and implementation of community level communication strategies that did not rely on power.

"I don't know about anybody else, but we've got a generator we've just prepared for that. Because where we were living, it was a regular thing, and we would freeze our own beef and everything. Just had to have it". (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"And they did have something put in place for that, where people actually, they didn't donate their generators, but they put them in one place for people to borrow." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"And remember last time when you were without power, and the police station, apparently a lot of people were going into the police station…A lot of people were going into Lilydale Police to charge their phones". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"That's it. And in the storm, a lot of places were either damaged, there was trees down, they had no power themselves, or there was something hazardous about them. That's why all of a sudden one at the high school pops up, because they had showers, they had power. Yeah." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"..issues of communication had come up, particularly when there's power outages. In Warburton it was noted by [Person's name] from the Redwood Centre

that they're doing a notice board, a community notice board, at the local bakery. So that if everything's out, there's a way to communicate the latest updates and that is by written sticker, kind of, system. So, there's a lot more awareness." Yarra Ranges_G2)

"We went to the police station, because what happened was it was COVID. We couldn't go outside of five kilometres. We lost power, which means we lost the internet, and we lost our phone power. Because that's the only way we can communicate. We can't hear what's happening on the radio. And we had 24 hours left in our cochlear implant, which means after a day, it goes flat, and then we can't hear anything at all. So apart from driving the car around the block and trying to charge it in the car, it wasn't working for us. So, we went to the police station and asked them to charge our phones or charge something, and they said no, because they said, "If we charge your phone, we have to charge everyone else's phones." I said, "Well ..." And then when we explained the situation. They just said, "Just pack your bags and go. Just get out." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

The **lack of available transportation** in the community and consequences for people was another area of concern.

"The logistics of it in those outer areas. Taxis are not going to come." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"A lot seemed to be reliant on cars, or driving, or a bus, or a taxi, or something. Once you get past Woori Yallock, you cannot get a taxi". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"She also spoke about access to transport, this person, her daughter is a wheelchair user, so her concern is accessible transport if her daughter was with her when there was a disaster. She said SES would typically be their first point of call. There was concerns around temporary accommodation for people with access needs. And appropriate temporary accommodation." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"Transport was a big thing because when something's happening you can't just ring up a taxi and expect them to be there in 15 minutes because that doesn't work. So, a lot of people have had to put a bit of thought into how they're going to get out of where they are, if they need to get out in a hurry." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"We spoke about road access, and how a lot of the roads in, I suppose, out in the hills, can be a bit of a barrier, and a challenge for access for ambulance and other services." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"I think if people have to evacuate where I am, and it would be the same up near Warburton, all the way along there. There are no safe areas to walk. ..There's no foot paths. There's no... The highway's too narrow, and you run up against the traffic…Oh, there'd be trees down everywhere". (Yarra Ranges_G1)

Mitigating transport issues – one method.

"For somebody who can't evacuate, they enact that plan. So, I think this is why going through the PCEP process is really good because you can identify the gaps. So, if you find transport is a gap, okay, how long is it going to take my transport to get to me, to get me out?" (Yarra Ranges_G1)

Accommodation considerations for people with disabilities was also discussed.

"So she had the Department of Housing provide ..a mobile home, like a granny flat type thing in the backyard. But it's got no insulation. It's infested with mould. It's not-... appropriate to live in. And they're paying $130 a week for this thing. Yeah. And it's taken like a year to get any form of action. Had to use their NDIS allowance to pay for an occupational therapist to prove why they needed to have insulation. And the end result was they put up this pathetic awning that really doesn't do anything. "(Yarra Ranges_G3)

"I think one thing we saw last June in the storm, particularly in Mount Dandenong area, all these people live in these little isolated shacks, sometimes big, but sometimes just they've been in this house for 50 years, and they're like hermits. But the emergency brings people out. So there is something about an emergency happens, people have a shared bonding. So I don't know if you can pre-prepare. You just say, "Well, next time it happens." Maybe there's something about just being aware of the gathering places, that it is comfortable and accessible. So I know at Kalorama there was this group that wanted to have a party, and traumatised people were coming to this gathering spot." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"So the next lady that I chatted to was ... She was sort of referring to her home in Healesville on a large property compared to where her daughter with a disability lives in a shared house in Lilydale and that they got flooded in last night and are at risk of bush fire and stuff. They don't actually have a plan, an emergency of plan of any sort. But then the daughter, who lives away in Lilydale, hardly has any impacts or any ... The risks are quite low where she's living. It's a much safer place even though they're not together sort of thing. But she did say that they had a house fire in 2002, and I know that that's a long time ago, but there was nowhere to get respite, because her daughter needs a hoist and everything. And yeah. There was nowhere for them to go." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

Learning 2: The value of communication and information provision.

We also learned that **communication and information provision** are important issues to consider, specifically identified areas included i). **obtaining information** related to a person's functional needs versus information that was **awareness raising** and ii). **existing information** and communication channels in the community (including gaps).

Where to obtain **meaningful** emergency related information that is related to the person's needs during disaster events?

"They need their oxygen, and if they don't have a generator, is there a place where people can go to get generators, to help them with this sort of thing? "(Yarra Ranges_G1)

"A newsletter in various formats, just to maybe update people, and make suggestions like that. Because I know one lady...She's out at East Warburton, and she can't drive anymore, she has dizzy spells and everything. And she tried to put in place a transport, pick up to get her to philosophy classes each week. and they just didn't turn up. So, people like that, she really needs to stop and think about it, and get some other things, or her family needs to get something in place." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"Like a flood. Where do I get sandbags? Or what do I do? That kind of practical help. Rather than overwhelming people. The feedback I got was overwhelming people by a long list of things on a website." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"Because later on we found out there was actually a station set up at one of the schools where there was running water. There was a charging station and that. But how would you get that information? And how would we know where that was? And then later on ... I think it was a community information session that we went to, and we said, "Well, where is this thing?" They said it moves every time. It depends on where the emergency is." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"A lot of people just didn't know exactly what we need to do in a practical sense. How do I do this? How do I prepare myself? What are the practical steps I need to take? Building a relationship. We did that. People with disabilities tend to be very connected to their disability group to find those life hacks…..So we sort of trade tips with each other. So that's helpful, linking in with other disability groups and learning from each other how you might overcome some of these barriers. What else? Yeah. A lot of nonofficial plans. We just buy extra food, buy extra water. Really want to have access to practical training and education. Relying not on instruction from the media." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"One thing that was highlighted was there's no training, as in practical, "How do I do this thing?" for community members. So like, "How do I prepare myself for a flood? How do I prepare myself for a bush fire?" like that practical stuff. One of the things was said was, "I don't want to go on a website and read it. I want to know what to do. I want you to tell me how to do this." Yeah. Right? And yeah. Where do I go? What do I do? That kind of thing. There was limited practical knowledge." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"There was one thing that always amazed me, because I'm on the Auburn Emergency Planning Group, I have a bit to do with ... We've discussed people with disabilities, but not to any depth. But we cannot access the list at the Shire office…And even with the NDIS, I believe that they've got to actually get you to sign a permission slip, to allow your information to be recorded, as a person with a disability. And I thought, well, that's a bit difficult, because you've got limited abilities, so it's something you've got to think about early is, have I given permission to somebody else to access that information? Because if it's an emergency, this place is humming, it's that busy, or the Incident Control Centres are that busy with, where is the fire? Where is it going? Or where is the flood?" (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"I know they do have areas where they can get the information in your town, but it's hard to find." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

Meaningful information that will help educate people and raise awareness, information that will assist people to plan and prepare including information about people's roles and responsibilities during disaster.

"It's Australian Emergency planning. So, they're now actually putting the onus on individuals to become actually more resilient. Not to be as reliant on the emergency services, and responders, that we need to be able to manage on our own for at least 72 hours." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"First and also not everyone enjoying reading from website. So practical training or education would help, especially people with a disability like my son. He's not going to log into website and sit down there and read from the beginning to the end, what to do. First, is his feature, he doesn't sit, for not even one second. Second, he doesn't have that language skill to be able to comprehend what the sentences or what the information is about. So we need more education." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"You've got to have more than one escape. I think planning for people with these issues, is certainly something. Another one said, well, they were relying on the CFA and the SES. Well, you can't, because the CFA's primary role is fire, and the defence of fire. Not of rescuing people, that's secondary. And the SES is the same, so they'll get you out of a flood, but they won't come and move you if the flood is threatening. You need to understand that you've got some third or fourth option, if you're going to need assistance as a person with a disability" (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"It's called warning fatigue…Yeah. Yeah. And it's like when it's bush fire season and people get told it's a super high threat day, to leave early, and people pack up the dog and the family and whatever, and off they go to annoy some family member for the day. And you can't do those five days in a row, so you end up just staying home and risking it". (Yarra Ranges_G3)

There are **existing information, tools, resources, and sources of support** that is available in the community.

"CFA, and Red Cross are doing what's called the EPAS programme, which is the Emergency Preparedness Advisory Service" (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"In Case of Emergency. So you put ICE1 or ICE2, ICE3 and that's the first person if there's an emergency who you want to be contacted, in case you are incapacitated or you are there and you're struggling you just go, "ICE." So I have my hubby and my son, my mum, my dad, my sister, and then I've got to work ICE. So if something happens, they've got the number to call." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"We encourage that, the ICE process. And most emergency services know what ICE means. And they will actually search phones for ICE…So they'll look up and they'll go, "Hey, there's an ICE number." That's the first number. We'll call them first if they're in hospital or they've been outside on the road…And it does work because I've had a participant who doesn't have any family and I was their first ICE contact and they were found unconscious on the side of the road and the police called me…They said, "Do you know who this is?" I said, "Yeah, I sure do. That's my participant. This is their problem. They suffer from this, this and this." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"And we use this, the PCEP. So, we go out to people's homes who have been identified with a disability, and we help them work through that capability wheel, to look at an emergency plan for themselves." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"We had a little newsletter, and a phone tree, and we all agreed, and would ring around, all that sort of thing". (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"But not a great deal. I think it's more like the communities, like streets will come together like through the storm, streets really got socially connected. They had WhatsApp groups, and things like that. So, they would talk to one another." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"Phone trees. They could be in your neighbourhood emergency plan. Could you expand that to phone trees? Or WhatsApp groups? We've got a quite large estate, and we've got a Facebook group". (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"LinC's capacity has really been reduced recently, but we would definitely work with them, because they have their food relief in their churches in Millgrove, so

they could possibly have contact with people that are in the Millgrove area. Because at this stage it's only a phone call. The power's out, the register is useless.” (Yarra Ranges_G1)

“What we did, part of storm recovery, when we did door knocking, and we actually put out a little flyer, "Know your neighbour." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

“I think the key bodies were fire brigade, council, SES, CFA.NDIS.” (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“CFA, yep. Local church.” (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“the Vulnerable Persons Register” (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“Community centres, and there's a lady here in the community centre”. (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“Red Cross too, yep, Red Cross.” (Yarra Ranges_G4)

Maybe I'll put support worker as well, just for something-(Yarra Ranges_G4)

“Yeah, and in-home carer. They're not always available, but at least, they often have a-phone that works”. (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“Personal alarm.”(Yarra Ranges_G4)

“... who has a defibrillator…. See the RSL has one and Amcal Chemist has one. And I believe the Bendigo Bank” (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“the VicEmergency app..It tells you ... You can set up a watch zone. So it'll tell you five kilometres around you.” (Yarra Ranges_G3)

“But also relying on existing networks, so for example, that might be a support worker, or a case worker, their neighbours, family, friends, and then broader community. That was a key theme, I think, that I found was emergencies tend to bring people together, the community together.” (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“And I think that's why SES is a big one, because people know SES. It's a familiar organisation”. (Yarra Ranges_G4)

“You have a notice board in here with the community centre. Half the town would not be able to get through to find it”. (Yarra Ranges_G3)

“So communication is one where we've got a central place. Emergency board would need to be manned, to take that private information. Build relationships, social connection, communication, various formats” (Yarra Ranges_G1)

“There's the normal noticeboard, and then there's one just for emergencies. And we've got a small group of us who, during an emergency, we will work out who's going to man that, so people come for information, to talk as well.” (Yarra Ranges_G1)

“it's just a council based one that goes out to all emergency services and Army Air Force, the whole lot. It's not guaranteed you'll get help, but it's a stepping stone to help. And what we do, we create care plans for our participants and go to the local police, fire brigade and ambulance and say, "You've got a person in

your area, this is their details, this is their NDS number and all the other details that they want to share." And we say, "Can you please keep that somewhere safe?" And then we go to the local council, tell them as well, as being on the register. And we've had them come out and help through bush fires and floods. My job, talking about rosy and wood-end way rather than this way. But they've been really good and they've done follow ups as well. After there's been an incident, they've come back to council, because we've got them on that registrar, and said, "Hey, is everything okay? Is there anything we could improve on? Anything we could do better?" (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Yeah. And normally they say, "We'll put the community policing liaison officer in touch with you." So then they normally ring you and say, "Okay, I've been given this document. Can you just confirm everything?" We confirm everything. They normally will then go out and talk to the participant and say, "Are you happy to be on our books here? And you know the outcome? It means that every policeman is going to be able to see this document. If something goes wrong, it'll be like a flag on that address on our system."(Yarra Ranges_G2)

But there are prevalent gaps, particularly related to use of **technology.**

"I don't own computer. I don't have the capacity to afford this stuff….It's an option, just saying a lot of people can't use the technology and there's not the work that's out there to cover that. Who'll do the technology?" (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Yeah, I remember that. I opted it out that's why I don't know anything about it. But the irony is that we call the GP's office and say, "Hey, can we get this medical information on behalf of this client?" And then we've got to go through the consent forms and then we only get snippets of what's current for them. But if we get them onto that, which I didn't even think about, it's always going to be updated and currently." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Yeah, I remember that. I opted it out that's why I don't know anything about it. But the irony is that we call the GP's office and say, "Hey, can we get this medical information on behalf of this client?" And then we've got to go through the consent forms and then we only get snippets of what's current for them. But if we get them onto that, which I didn't even think about, it's always going to be updated and currently." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"…we talk about social media, Facebook groups, things like that. For the people that don't use those, and there is a significant amount of people that don't, how can we communicate to them?" (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"I've heard that myGov... I was talking to somebody just recently, and there is a lot of people that didn't want to go with the myGov, because there is issues of privacy." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"I've never done the MyGov thing, I've never done that because simply, I've had experience where there's other people with the same surname and name in the area. They've caused problems. I haven't and I just can't get access to those things, services, because of other people." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

Communicating with **people who have lived experience** enables greater disability awareness.

"I interviewed two people that had profound disability. And to realise that I didn't understand really, the fact that the limitations that they've got. In things like if I

went into their property to help rescue them or move them to somewhere more comfortable and more suitable, how do you approach that person, you know? Particularly if they can't understand what ... Well, they're stone deaf and can't hear what I'm saying-... or what I'm offering. And not being able to understand that, or savvy why I'm there. (Yarra Ranges_G4)

Yes, another person I interviewed was blind. Well, exactly the same things. And understanding some of the things that I thought were quite normal, like one of the people said, "Well, I don't have anything to do with the NDIS, because if I do, it's going to affect my Centrelink, and I can't live without Centrelink." And I thought, holy hell, what's going on? (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"And in addition to that, on a larger scale, the community needs to have a bit more disability awareness. There is a thing where if you've never had experience with disability before and you see someone with an obvious disability…that kind of comes up, like, "I don't want to offend," or "I'm just not going to engage." How do we break down that barrier? How do we make people in the community more disability aware so that that barrier is not there and that people with disability are generally more included in their community? Because once that happens, we have more of an awareness of how to help and how to support everybody rather than leaving that as the other." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"People without disability said that they rely on people with disabilities to tell them what they need. Right? So you have to tell me what you need, which is fair enough. You need to find ways to capture that information and make it practical. And how we educate the community to understand what it is that people with disabilities need?" (Yarra Ranges_G3)

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Learning 3: The value of supportive relationships

Relationships matter in the community. Relationships can be informal or formal supports and centred around who is involved in the persons day to day life.

Informal relationships

"What I heard from a few people who have a disability, they have developed relationships with a favourite taxi driver, and they call on them, and they've got such a relationship with them, that if that person's not available, they will get somebody else." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"..another thing that works well is social connection." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"A lot of the people that I know that have got any, sort of, access requirements have got a support network that they can rely on, like a family friend or a neighbour." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"But the thing is that neighbours connecting is great for so many different reasons, just social connection, friendships that you never knew existed, when you need a cup of sugar, when you need a generator" (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"There are so many layers. This person also offers their home to community members in need, as well. And that's linked in, I think, through the local church. I think those layers of community connection and links are a running theme and I think are really important". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"Two years ago, we had trees down, and our street was blocked off for a week, and everyone came out, and we were so much closer. We were talking. This woman up the street had a baby two weeks before. I didn't even know she was pregnant. You know? But it's like after all the trees were cleaned up, that connection hasn't Continued. No. I don't know why that is". (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"The others just kept to themselves. Some of them just packed up their car and just left, and we didn't know where they were or whether they were coming back or anything like that. So yeah. It's the pretty disconnected street." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

Disaster can prompt unstructured supports that lead to structured supports.

"We door knocked over 500 houses…. we also identified some vulnerable people, and so we were able to get assistance for them." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

Structured formal relationships.

"They would then contact their NDIS worker, who would be their first point of call. She spoke of barriers for people with mental health and disability, with authority figures coming in, and that being a trigger, and not wanting ... Or maybe being resistant to people telling them what to do or leave their home. And we chatted again about that building connections in the community, and having known people, I guess, check in with the neighbours, or like having someone come and check in on you, so you know who they are, so in an emergency, you're connecting with someone that you potentially have met, or an organisation that you know." - (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"The other person I spoke with was an NDIS worker, so spoke a lot from I suppose, lived experience of working with people with disability. Lives out in the western suburbs, so the SES was a big one that they relied on quite heavily. And then also, through the Vulnerable Persons Register, and linking in with the army base. The army to a lot of food parcels, evacuation, and I thought, which was a really amazing thing. They had a pre-established relationship with people in the community, which I think was really important, so it wasn't a shock when the army turned up, or these people in positions of authority or power. I mean, it didn't work all the time, but I think just maybe seeing and connecting with people a couple of times a year, so people knew who was going to turn up when.
She also spoke about emergency plans and contingency plans. And having that for your day-to-day, located at multiple points within their home, so they'd have it stuck up on the wall. And this plan would be updated regularly, so it was a living document. Establishing links with local council and local police. And ensuring those people, those resources, had access to your information across those various services. Particularly about important triggers with these people that they're working with." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"But also relying on existing networks, so for example, that might be a support worker, or a case worker, their neighbours, family, friends, and then broader community. That was a key theme, I think, that I found was emergencies tend to bring people together, the community together". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

Learning 4: People undertake preparedness activities.

Lived experience of disaster prompts people to have a plan.

"One of the biggest things that came out with the people that I spoke to was that a lot of them actually planned for something to happen, where I think prior to, maybe, Black Saturday and prior to the storm last year, a lot of people hadn't even thought about planning. So some of the people I spoke to said, "Look, they planned for the evacuation." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

Categories of preparedness activities are highlighted below:

Preparedness supplies and plans.

"Yeah it's good to have a blanket and carry some bedding and that sort of thing. The other thing that they should be carrying, if they are going to take a blanket, is carry one of those thermal sheeting ones for temperature. But carry a fire blanket that is chemically retardant to fire because it could save life in the car or in some situations." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"So this woman as well, as part of her package, she not only had the blanket and the water, she had toilet paper there too and also non-perishable food. So she's pretty well prepared even though she lives out in the burbs. But they're all really great ideas for everyone to have one of these packs." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Bill, phone charger, bits and pieces, a blanket. One lady had a blanket in her car. First aid kid and water and torch." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Essential documents, your will, and bits like your ... You mentioned a moment ago, your-Your ID documents." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"A couple bottles of water, that doesn't deteriorate are in there. A change of undies. I might need them before the day is over." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"Have a toothbrush. To me, that's more important." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"And some spare toilet paper" (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"And your kit of things before you leave. Mine, I've got a Kmart tub about so big, with a red lid on it, so it doesn't get confused with all the rest around the house". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"But that's got things like my spare battery for my phone, a spare charger which you can get a cable for about $2 or $3, in case I forget the one that's plugged in, in the kitchen, you know". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"Yeah, well there's one now, which you can have a solar panel on your verandah. And you can charge this pack up, which looks like a big shoebox, a couple of big shoeboxes." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"Water storage, food items. To have a backpack at the ready with all of the things like medication, and things that you really desperately need. Power of attorney papers, particularly if you have a child that's autistic or has special needs. To include other members of the family when you're not available. A discussion on house insurances and documents." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"..having a go-to tub or backpack. Having a plan for their animals. And having a place that they can go to, like a friend's house, or family, someone in the community that is out of that area. And again, they mentioned the Vulnerable Persons Register as well, as being something that was very useful." (Yarra Ranges_G4)

Managing health needs.

"I've got that, that medi app thing on my phone, so I can just order my scripts, and that from my pharmacy]". (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"if you record your prescriptions or load your prescriptions onto the My Health app, you can get them anywhere." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Making sure your medication, and any medical needs are available elsewhere from your myGov." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"medical requirements for people that do need any assistance. One thing's come up for people that require oxygen. If there's no power, if the power's cut to their property, there's nowhere to run the oxygen machine. I mean, how do you plan for that? Do you have a generator? And if they have to be removed from their property, where they're evacuated to has to have the equipment that they require as well." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Other people have an evacuation box with their own medication." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Now we bought a generator. We had to go out and buy a generator so at least we can charge our cochlear implant and charge our phones, but that doesn't help if the towers are down" (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"I've got the MePACS alarm at home". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

Social connections.

"my first person seemed to be really well connected in with the community, so has a couple of friends that live very close by with walking distance, and she can call on them quite readily. She knows about all the resources in their community. So she was quite an exceptional example, I think, because I don't think typically a lot of people are like that. Yeah. And again, her neighbour provided her with power when there was a power outage. He must have had a generator or something like that". (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"Yeah, we've done that too, because my street, they're fairly elderly, so we do. We've got gates, and whatever. We're all going to go to the dam on the corner. . We can go right through the paddies if they're not on fire, or whatever." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

Communication technology.

"So actually, a lot of them they come to my phone because they don't have mobile phones. And then I forward it onto the chemist mobile phone and we do that with a lot of our participants now as well. They [the doctor] send them to me because we've got the authorised station, the consent form, and then I forward it onto the chemist because they don't have the... Some of the participants don't have mobile phones." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Somebody also reported the over reliance on storing mobile numbers or telephone numbers on a mobile phone. That battery goes out, you're gone, so writing the stuff down on a piece of paper is also good." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"I forgot to bring my mobile in one for one occasion and I only remember my daughter's number because her number is very close to my own number. And I couldn't remember my husband number. No. Because everything is pressing now. So what I did is, I started writing a few numbers in a small list and putting it my purse and I carry it. Nowadays I still have it, just in case I don't have any anything. But at least I still have one, or at least four or five numbers." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

Living situation.

"I used to live on a large property, I don't anymore. But I lived on 10 acres and there was one section, a fence line that was probably about 300 metres long and there was no gate in that fence line. So if there was an emergency I wouldn't be able to get through that fence line. Most people could climb over the fence whereas I couldn't. So I had to liaise with my neighbour and organise to put three separate gates in that fence, just so if there was a bush fire come through, I had three different...Exit points." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"We didn't have any stock. I had my dog but it was just for me, personally. Because my property was mainly bush, whereas my next-door neighbour's property was cleared farmland. So I would be a lot better off in a cleared paddock rather than in amongst trees and shrubs. So that was something that I did." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"And then so the next person was living out at Dixons Creek on a large property up there. Had a plan. Practised the plan on a regular basis with the kids. Did things like put gates in the fences with the neighbouring properties so that they had additional exit routes." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

Animals.

"I used to have cat carriers for each of my cats. I just realised I've just lent one of those to somebody." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"We had some horses at our place, that were registered. We got our ponies out, but I had to just open up the fences, and let them out." (Yarra Ranges_G1)

"And I have been through the Ash Wednesday…We took our dog with us. But I had to leave, I had my two horses in the pad, two weeks, not knowing if I'd see them again, ever. And it was a very hard thing." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"With the emergency, I have one saying they also have an emergency pack for their animal that they took with". (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"This person has birds, so on a personal level, they have extra cages and that sort of thing. And then they have a plan in place if it's not possible to take the birds to the temporary accommodation". (Yarra Ranges_G4)

"I know when we pack packs we have emergency packs for the animal. They had it there for all our participants at their front door. We make sure their foods are in there, some snack foods and we rotate them monthly. So we pull them out and then put fresh ones in because they've got allergies. So if they can go to a shelter and at least we know they've got something they can eat until the shelter can work out appropriate food for them, because they've got nut allergies or whatever. And the EpiPens are in there and things like that." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

We also learned that organisations also undertake preparedness activities to support clients to plan and prepare for disaster.

"We encourage the staff also, sorry, the clients, to upload Vic app. Bureau Meteorology app. Tune into ABC radio when things are down. Have backup battery as well for your radio if things are down. Because when electricity's down, that's your only source of communication. We've got a whole bunch of critical numbers as well" (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"And that way if there's an emergency and we take them to hospital, we just say, "They're on the MyGov app, can you go in and check their records?" It's great news…. So you can do e-scripts now. I do e-script with a lot of our participants." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"We get our GPs that work with our participants, actually show them what they've put on there and say, "Are you happy for all this to be disclosed and put on there?" And yeah, the participant says yes or no". (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"They do six monthly practical exercises, staff and residents together" (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"So we just sit down to have a conversation and say, "Look, for your safety, as part of your care plan with us and your safety plan with us, imagine evacuation plan, can we get you to do this?" And we tell them why. That means anybody in the medical field can have access. So if something goes wrong, they've got access to your records and the minute you sit down and you explain it to them, 90% will say, "Yes, go" Some want to think about it but it's there. And I always say, I've got to put in because I've got conditions, everybody can't see. I suffer with Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo. You're not going to know that unless I'm having a really bad turn. You're just going think... I have been accused of being on drugs and being drunk. And I'm like, "No." I switch from side to side. I don't spin, so mine's different to everybody elses', so it's there so that they can tap in and see it straight away. And they you say that to them, they say, "Yep. Sure." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"I know one of the community centres has now got solar panels, but it's not a foolproof system because they don't have any batteries. They don't have generators but again, this talk of generators and this discussion hadn't really happened." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

This includes **education** for staff, using **existing resources**.

"from our organisation, we hire support workers. We make it mandatory that anyone that gets hired that they need to complete the online CFA training, bushfire training and disability support worker bushfire, leaving early,

preparedness training. There's something like that. So what that does is, that prepares the worker when they should drive or when they shouldn't drive. And when to take diversions and when not to take diversions. And also how to bring up this discussion of leaving early with the clients with disabilities as well. And to initiate the leaving-early plan with them as well. So that training's there on the CFA website." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"one of them is called Bushfire Safety for Workers." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"We do those two, mandatory. Now there's a third one. I think it's called Bushfire Planning You and the Person You Care For. So they're all intertwined together, sort of thing. It's about encouraging and working with your family or client to prepare a plan". (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"Yeah, go straight on the CFA website. They're fantastic training, absolutely free. The way we do it, when people come for employment as a disability support worker, they've got four trainings that they need to complete before they come on Infection Control Training, CFA training. This is two of them, Medication training, I think that's all. Or maybe one more and then you're, kind of, on the books." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

"One or the other. Bushfire planning, this training on the CFA, we've only ever made them do it once. But then it would be good to do it regularly. But we will get prompts. Now, this is all brand new, this legislative thing. So we're going to get prompts prior to the fire season, "Hey guys, remember the training that we did? Now it's time to enact. Don't forget. Get your radio ready. Upload your apps. Make a plan. Where are you going to go? What are you going to do with your pets? Think about these things now." And then we send the same alert out to the support workers, bring up that discussion with the client, so that it's in the forefront. At the end of the day when fire comes, when flood comes, and it's serious, it's going to be every man for himself. You'd better be planned. You better prepare properly because the likelihood of someone knocking on your door is slim." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"Another one had done a lot of evacuation fire drills and also worked a lot with staff, but some one-on-one with the residents. So that conversation was more about actually practising it, not just about intellectually talking about practising, and that was interesting, because she asked me about my fire drills at home, which I haven't done. And then last one was a woman with vision impairment, and so she talked a lot about advocating and possibility of, say, a newsletter to raise awareness. She was really interested in doing newsletters. That was a lot of what we talked about. And she's wanting to go on to the disability advisory committee for Council, so to share information." (Yarra Ranges_G3)

"… from the SES and they're doing a whole lot of new modules. They're running a pilot programme at the moment and it'll be rolled out to all of the different CFAs and SES programmes. And there's going to be a lot of training thing as well, which is going to be really good." (Yarra Ranges_G2)

KEY MESSAGES

This facilitated DIEP forum brought multiple stakeholders together to learn about:

- *ways we can work together to ensure people with disability are aware, safe, and prepared for emergencies triggered by natural hazards and other emergencies (e.g., house fire, pandemic).*
- *actions we can take to make sure people and their support needs are at the centre of emergency management planning.*
- *barriers and enablers to the inclusion of people with disability before, during, and after disasters.*

1. *The impact of disaster affects everyone in this community, particularly around loss of community infrastructure which puts people with disability at greater risk. Greater consideration about transport methods and accommodation options will benefit the community.*
2. *In the Yarra Ranges, individual and organisations demonstrate capabilities and actions in disaster preparedness activities. Leveraging existing knowledge, skills and actions will benefit the community.*
3. *Meaningful communication and information provision enables people with disability to be aware, safe and prepared before, during and after emergencies. There are existing resources, tools and training in the community.*
4. *Supportive relationships exist in the community, in both informal and formal capacities. These are **other** types of supports that people with disability could rely on, which are just as helpful during and after disaster events.*

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