

Emergency Preparedness Survey: Homelessness and Housing Service Organisations



Key Messages

- Organisational preparedness is crucial for minimizing service disruption during emergencies.
- Services play a vital role in supporting clients who are beyond the reach of other services during emergencies.
- Challenges in business continuity planning include rapidly changing scenarios and compliance with government directives.
- Resources, tools, training, and collaborations between service providers and with government and emergency services are needed to strengthen business continuity plans.

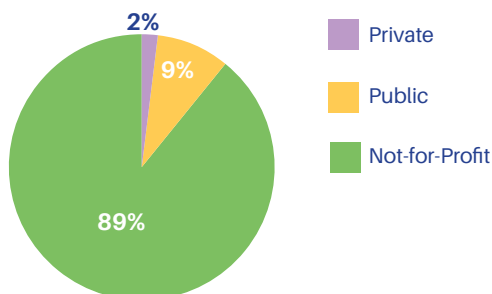
Online survey across Queensland,
March - April 2022.

Number of survey respondents:

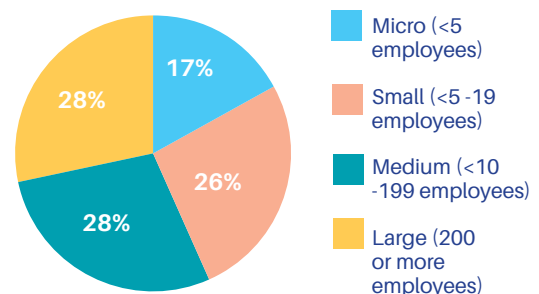
47 (18% response rate)

Organisational Profile

Organisation type (%)



Organisation size (%)



Which hazard events impacted on the QLD Homelessness and Housing Sector in the past ten years?



79%

Pandemic



66%

Flood



62%

Severe storm or cyclone



23%

Premises fire



19%

Heatwave



17%

Storm tides
or tsunami



17%

Bushfire



15%

Drought

How did hazard events impact clients and businesses?



Impact on Business

- Disrupted service continuity.
- Increased demand for services, higher workloads, and reduced capacity
- Workforce shortage, loss of organisational knowledge.

“The impact has been mostly staff resilience and churn resulting in 23% turnover in our workforce, up from 7%. Unplanned leave also remains high. Overall impact on the organisation is that teams are now greener and less experienced resulting in a drop in outputs and performance measures, decrease in quality, and an increase in risk. Senior managers are now less strategic and much more operational, which will likely have a longer-term impact on the future of the business. Minimal impact on revenue streams and expenses fortunately.”



Impact on Clients:

- Isolation, increased homelessness, unsafe circumstances.
- Limited access, slowed response times.
- Property damage, displacement.

“COVID had isolation impacts on our elderly and youth. Our annual youth survey showed an increase in homelessness and unsafe circumstances at home, and drug use.”

What do homelessness and housing service organisations do to prepare clients?

Common activities that have been taken fully or partially:



Referring clients to community services to enhance their emergency preparedness (fully implemented by 54% of the organisations, partially implemented by 35%)



Identifying clients who are at risk during an emergency (fully implemented by 51% of the organisations, partially implemented by 40%)

Activities that organisations felt they could not do:



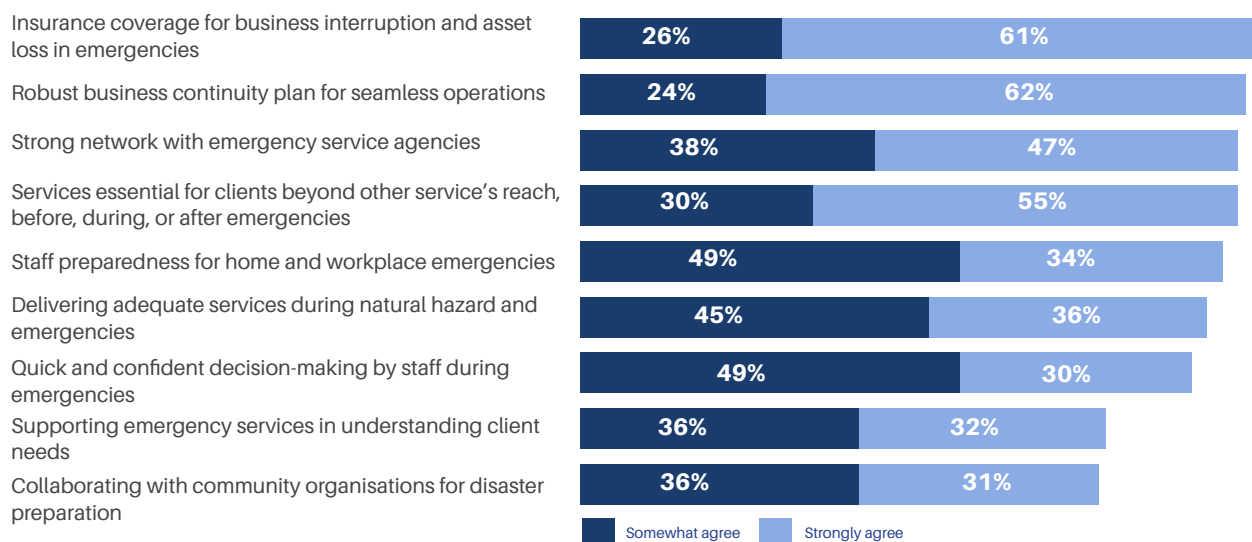
Practicing emergency drills with clients to increase their familiarity, sense of preparedness and confidence in how to respond effectively in an emergency (26%)

Activities that may be implemented in the future:



Providing formal support or education to clients to increase their active participation in preparing for emergencies (47%)

Organisational Emergency Preparedness



Service Continuity

81%

of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to deliver an adequate level of services to their clients in case of natural hazards, pandemics and other types of emergencies. But, they experienced a number of barriers.

Barriers to Service Continuity

- Challenges existed in having advanced plans for diverse emergencies that were unfolding (e.g., floods, pandemic) and complying with government directives (e.g., safety protocols, evacuation orders, travel restrictions).
- Limited services, lack of collaboration (e.g., interagency collaboration, internal collaboration) and stretched resources were identified challenges.

"We faced challenges in coordinating with other service providers to meet the increased demand for supports. Limited collaboration and communication hindered our ability to effectively refer clients to crisis accommodation and emergency housing arrangements."



Actions That Homelessness and Housing Service Providers Can Take Now

- Update business continuity plans to address specific hazards and impacts.
- Enhance client support measures for addressing isolation, homelessness, and unsafe circumstances.
- Address workforce shortage through recruitment, retention, and staff well-being strategies.
- Improve infrastructure resilience to minimize property damage and ensure service continuity.
- Foster collaboration with other service providers, government, and emergency services for resource sharing and joint preparedness efforts.



Use the [Community Services Industry Alliance Planning for Business Continuity in Times of Disaster Guide](#) to get started!



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