

Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning (DIEP) Forum Report

City of Kwinana, 2 September 2025



Image: Small groups of people at tables, discussing inclusive emergency planning together

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Introduction

Emergencies and disasters impact all members of society, but people with disabilities often face disproportionate risks due to systemic barriers, fragmented support networks, and inaccessible planning frameworks. The Disability Inclusive Emergency Management (DIEM) initiative, funded by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), was developed in collaboration with the University of Sydney's Collaborating4Inclusion research team. DIEM promotes cross-sector collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and ongoing improvement to advance a nationally consistent approach to disability-inclusive emergency management.

This is the fourth phase of the Disability Inclusive Emergency Management (DIEM) initiative, which addresses the disproportionate risks faced by people with disabilities during emergencies. Earlier phases launched the DIEM Toolkit—a practical resource to support inclusive emergency management planning.

The DIEM Toolkit, which includes Principles and Practice Standards, was endorsed by the National Emergency Management Ministers Meeting (NEMMM) on 15 November 2024. NEMMM agreed for the Toolkit and its components to be implemented nationally, ensuring consistency across Australia in the development of inclusive emergency management plans and practices.

DIEM implementation aligns with NEMMM priorities 3 and 5, which focus on preparing communities to be more resilient to the impacts of disasters and building future capabilities for prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, with people at the centre. It also supports governments in delivering on Health and Wellbeing Policy Priority 4 under Australia's Disability Strategy (2021–2031) and advancing Recommendation 5.4 of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. This recommendation calls for a review of national agreements, strategies, and plans that affect people with disability, including those related to emergency management.

The current DIEM project phase focuses on promoting awareness and adoption of the Toolkit. This includes facilitating Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning (DIEP) forums, which foster cross-sector conversations to identify and address the support needs of people with disabilities in emergencies and build willingness and capability to share responsibility for delivering inclusive support.

DIEP forums bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including government agencies, community and disability service providers, emergency management professionals, people with lived experience of disability, and advocates.

Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning (DIEP) Forum

The Collaborating 4 Inclusion Research Team, operating out of The University of Sydney's Impact Centre for Disability Research and Policy, facilitated this forum with funding support from the Australian Government National Emergency Management Agency.

The forum aimed to advance inclusive emergency management by introducing the DIEM Toolkit and facilitating discussions that emphasised the interconnectedness of inclusive

emergency management plans and practices at three levels: individual, organisational, and community.

By convening diverse stakeholders and fostering cross-sector collaboration, the forum laid the groundwork for advancing strategic partnerships and driving systemic change in inclusive emergency management. In addition to self-assessing individual-level preparedness, participants engaged in facilitated interactive discussions which were concentrated on these topics:

- **Understanding Emergency Plans of Service Providers:** Exploring organisational preparedness and continuity planning.
- **Inclusive Planning:** Embedding person-centred approaches into every phase of emergency management.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Building collaborative networks across sectors to drive inclusive practices.
- **Accessible Resourcing:** Ensuring equitable allocation and deployment of resources to meet accessibility needs. This topic included conversations about Inclusive and Accessible Evacuation Support Options centred on identifying supports that enable safe, dignified, and inclusive evacuations.

Purpose of the Forum and Report

Using a collaborative and participatory approach, the forum facilitated rich, multi-stakeholder conversations to identify systemic challenges, practical opportunities, and promising practices.

The purpose of this report is to distil key findings from the discussions, synthesise cross-group themes, and highlight actionable insights. By reflecting the voices of participants and showcasing examples of innovation, this report serves as both a baseline and a resource for advancing disability-inclusive emergency management in the local context where the DIEP forum was held.

Recognising the urgent need for systemic change to rectify long-standing inequities and ensure inclusive planning for all. This report aims to:

- Identify challenges and opportunities for disability-inclusive emergency management as discussed by forum participants.
- Amplify promising practices shared by participants to inspire action.
- Encourage ongoing collaboration and shared learning among diverse sectors and communities.

The following sections overview the forum participants, present a synthesis of thematic findings from the forum discussions, and share promising practices. We close the report with concluding remarks and next steps.

How to use this report

Thematic Synthesis as a Foundation: The thematic synthesis presented in this report reflects the rich discussions and diverse insights shared by forum participants. It captures the experiences and expertise of those who attended, representing a range of sectors, communities, and lived experiences. This synthesis serves as a starting point for fostering strategic partnerships and building a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges in advancing Disability Inclusive Emergency Management (DIEM). By highlighting key ideas raised by forum participants, it lays the groundwork for collaborative efforts to strengthen inclusive practices.

Promising Practices: It is important to recognise that the promising practices outlined in this report are a synthesis of what was discussed by participants during the forum. These practices are presented as shared insights from their lived experiences and practices without evaluation of these practices. We have included participant insights on promising practices to support ongoing information sharing and local collaboration among participants and stakeholders, fostering a collective approach to advancing DIEM.

Forum Participants: While the insights reflect the voices represented at the forum, it is important to acknowledge that some key organisations or stakeholder groups may be absent from the discussions. Readers are encouraged to review the list of participating organisations (provided at the end of this report) and adopt a critical approach to inclusion by collaborating with these organisations and their networks, as well as identifying and engaging additional stakeholders. Their contributions can enrich future DIEM planning and collaboration.

Purpose and Application of the Report: This report is intended to be a practical resource for the local host organisation and their cross-sector partners, supporting ongoing efforts to enhance DIEM. It captures the collective dialogue and diverse perspectives shared during the forum, providing insights and examples that stakeholders can use to conduct their DIEM maturity self-assessment, identify areas for growth, and collaboratively plan for more inclusive practices. Rather than providing pre-determined conclusions or recommendations, this report is designed to encourage reflexive thinking, helping stakeholders identify their own priorities and actions through continued collaboration.

Why there is no executive summary in this report: The absence of an executive summary is deliberate and reflects the participatory nature of the forum. Readers are invited to engage critically with the findings and use the DIEM Toolkit to drive meaningful and locally relevant change. This report also serves as a call to action for broad and sustained collaboration. The next steps for hosts and participants should include proactive outreach through participant networks to maintain the momentum generated by the forum and expand engagement to reach a wider audience. By doing so, stakeholders can build a genuinely inclusive and resilient approach to emergency management that reflects the needs and contributions of all communities.

This report is part of a broader initiative to build DIEM capability. The research team will synthesise findings across multiple DIEP forums, and a consolidated report with comprehensive recommendations and an executive summary will be developed at that stage. For now, this report is designed to foster dialogue, shared ownership, and local action to advance inclusive emergency management practices.

Participants

This forum report has been shaped by the expertise and contributions of those who participated. Invitation to participate was extended through the networks of the local hosts, City of Kwinana.

The DIEP forum was held on 2 September 2025 at John Wellard Community Centre in Wellard, Western Australia. Fourteen people from five organisations participated in this DIEP forum, having the following roles:

| Participant Role | Number |
|--|---------------|
| Federal Government worker | 0 |
| State/Territory Government worker | 2 |
| Local Government worker | 4 |
| Emergency Services Personnel | 4 |
| Disability Service Provider | 0 |
| Community Service Provider | 0 |
| Aged Care Service Provider | 0 |
| Health Service Provider | 0 |
| Worker/Member for Disability Advocacy or Representative Organisation | 3 |
| Individual with lived experience of disability (not representing an organisation) | 1 |
| Other | 0 |
| Total | 14 |

Thematic Synthesis

The following summarises the key themes and promising practices raised. These are organised by each of the four discussion topics.

Discussion Topic 1: Understanding Emergency Plans of Service Providers

Discussion Overview

This facilitated discussion explored what participants understand about organisational preparedness and continuity planning. These groups were provided with the following discussion prompts:

1. What do you know about the emergency preparedness of services you use or provide, such as community, health, disability, housing, aged care, and social welfare?
2. How are these plans structured to ensure continuity of service during emergencies?

Participants were encouraged to take the following into consideration:

- Awareness and Preparedness: Are the service providers well-informed and ready for various emergency scenarios?
- Staff Readiness: Is the staff adequately trained to act during an emergency?
- Communication with Clients: Are the emergency plans communicated effectively to the clients or service recipients?
- Understanding Client Needs: Do the service providers have a detailed understanding of their clients' specific needs during an emergency?
- Questions and Concerns: Discuss any strengths, concerns or queries you have regarding the emergency plans of organisations that support individuals with disabilities.

Discussion Topic 1: Key themes

This section synthesises findings from two discussions on organisational emergency preparedness. Both discussions focused on the preparedness of service providers, their capacity to fulfil their roles during emergencies, and the steps needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people with disabilities and other at-risk groups.

The discussions featured contributions from individuals with lived experiences, local government representatives, and community advocates, offering valuable perspectives on the challenges faced in organisational emergency preparedness. However, it is important to highlight that no community or disability service providers were present at the forum. As a result, participants' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of service providers could not be directly verified or informed by those working within these organisations.

Participants explored the alignment and structure of emergency plans, identifying systemic gaps and opportunities for improvement. Key barriers to organisational emergency preparedness included resource constraints, high staff turnover in service organisations, and the absence of consistent regulation or enforcement of emergency preparedness standards.

Participants consistently acknowledged the importance of the Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery (PPRR) framework in guiding emergency management, identifying a need for accessible, tailored, and regularly exercised plans that align with broader emergency systems.

Forum participants demonstrated a limited understanding of the broader responsibilities of service providers in inclusive emergency management. Without service provider representation at the forum, conversations lacked key insights into the current practices and challenges faced by organisations in implementing emergency preparedness frameworks, such as Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP).

Due to the absence of service providers, the discussions tended to emphasise the responsibilities of governments and emergency services for inclusive planning. This perspective contributed to a prevailing view that governments and emergency services carry the primary burden of responsibility for inclusive emergency management, rather than recognising it as a shared responsibility that includes service providers, communities, and individuals. (See also **Theme One** under **Topic Two**).

Participants frequently cited systemic barriers as significant challenges to achieving inclusive emergency preparedness. These included limited resources, the lack of regulatory oversight requiring service providers to develop emergency plans, and the fragmentation of service provision under systems like the NDIS. These barriers were perceived to prevent service providers from fully participating in emergency planning and contributed to a reliance on external agencies (e.g., governments, emergency services) rather than fostering internal capacity within organisations.

Gaps in Emergency Preparedness Among Service Providers

Both discussions highlighted gaps in emergency preparedness among service providers, including aged care facilities, group homes, and disability service organisations. Participants identified inconsistencies in planning, a lack of audits or enforcement of emergency preparedness standards, and uneven capabilities among service providers.

- "I don't think they've got a good plan... The conversations aren't happening about this stuff."
- "Who's auditing these people? Who's making sure that they've got plans and they understand what to do and when?"
- "They provide direction but then lean on the services to have their own plans in place."

Participants highlighted that many service providers, particularly smaller ones, face significant resource and capacity constraints, making it difficult for them to develop and implement emergency preparedness plans. This is compounded by high staff turnover and a casualised workforce.

- "Service providers are under-resourced and don't have time to get to these things."
- "Now with the NDIS, you've got lots of little providers that have popped up that probably don't have the resources to create all those things, or they're independent sole providers."

Challenges in Evacuation for People with Disabilities

The discussions consistently emphasised the complexities of evacuating people with disabilities, particularly those living in supported accommodation or requiring assistance with mobility, medical equipment, or personal care. Key challenges included the time-intensive nature of preparing individuals for evacuation, the risk of bottlenecks in areas with limited exit routes, and the need for accessible transport and specific resources at evacuation centres.

- "You've got 40 clients, some of them with walkers and stuff, where you've got to go, 'Everybody, let's go.'"
- "How can I help her prepare for something like this... She's got hip problems, she's got a walking frame, she's got a scooter."

Role of Coordination and Alignment Across Plans

Both groups stressed the significance of coordination across organisations and agencies to ensure a cohesive emergency response. Participants weren't sure about the emergency management standards for disability service providers. They reported that misaligned or contradictory plans between agencies can lead to confusion and inefficiencies during a crisis. Additionally, participants called for service providers to actively engage in local emergency management planning and coordinate their plans with state and local governments. Participants expressed that all emergency plans should follow the PPRR framework, include clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and be aligned across agencies and service providers.

- "Is there a regulation or what requirements are there for providers to implement emergency planning for their clients?"
- "Building those relationships with different services... It's rough if the first time you reach out to someone is in that moment of, I need you to do this or this needs to happen."
- "There's no point in having a plan that's really detailed, and you've rehearsed it, but it's in complete contradiction with the agency next door."

Participants expressed the need for organisational emergency plans to be person-centred, context-specific, accessible, and easy to locate. They noted variability in the visibility of local emergency plans, as well as the importance of ensuring organisational plans are relevant and integrated within the broader emergency management framework.

Continuity of Services

Ensuring that services for people with disability and other at-risk groups can continue during and after an emergency was a key focus across both discussions. Participants highlighted the need for clear roles, regular plan reviews, and training exercises to maintain service continuity in crises. They also discussed the importance of ensuring service providers remain operational and functional during emergencies.

- "So, part of the DEMC [District Emergency Management Committee] roles and local government roles... You have to have workshops or exercise, and exercise plans all the way up to the state government."
- "It's the time that we take them again with everybody organised... They've got pill packs, listed packs, medication."
- "They need to have some sort of... So PPRR [Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery] ... They need to plan for stuff. They probably have to, as part of their own plans, exercise..."

Barriers to Accessibility and Inclusion

The discussions underscored the inadequate provision of accessible infrastructure in evacuation centres and the absence of specific planning for individuals with disabilities or additional needs. Participants raised concerns about how these gaps perpetuate exclusion and unsafe conditions during emergencies.

- "It's hard to accommodate, like have a specific location and go, 'That's for accessibility, diverse groups, whatever you want to call it.'"
- "It's got to be relevant. I guess the other thing, they'd have to be accessible."

Community Relationships and Informal Networks

One group identified communication and collaboration as vital elements of organisational emergency preparedness. They noted the importance of relationships between agencies to facilitate effective coordination during emergencies. Establishing these relationships and partnerships before emergencies occur was emphasised.

- "The next bit was how the plans are structured to ensure continuity of service... Being able to communicate with your clients, your staff, or other agencies—this is what the plan is."
- "Building those relationships with different services... It's rough if the first time you reach out to someone is in that moment of, I need you to do this or this needs to happen."

Both groups discussed the value of leveraging community relationships and informal networks to support organisational emergency preparedness. They emphasised that engaging with neighbours, local communities, and informal networks is vital for reaching individuals who may not have formal support systems.

- "If you know that you've got a neighbour with a disability, check in on them. Don't just think about yourselves, think about those who might need your help as well."
- "Check in with their neighbours. Do they need you? You want to leave?"

Discussion Topic 1: Promising Practices

Promising practices were a call to action that emerged from the discussion and ideas of participants.

Provide Accessible Tools and Training to Service Providers

Develop and disseminate user-friendly tools and provide training to service providers on how to create and implement individual emergency plans (e.g., P-CEP) with their clients. Embed person-centred emergency planning into organisational practices, focusing on tailoring plans to the specific needs of individuals, while engaging clients and their families in the process.

Illustrative Quote: "Each of those four people in [the group home] would have... their own individual needs... I couldn't imagine the four of them rolling into an evac centre."

Integrated Plans with Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Ensure that all emergency plans follow the PPRR framework, include clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and are aligned across agencies and service providers.

Illustrative Quote: "There's no point in having a plan that's really detailed... but it's in complete contradiction with the agency next door."

Regularly Exercising and Reviewing Plans

Require regular exercises and reviews of organisational emergency plans to ensure they remain up-to-date, relevant, and effective.

Illustrative Quote: "So they need to... exercise... They need to plan for stuff... through planning and preparing."

Developing Community Relationships and Partnerships

Foster relationships between service providers, community organisations, and neighbours to enhance local emergency preparedness and improve response coordination.

Illustrative Quote: "Having those relationships is really important... So, when you say, 'Hey... I need you to do this,' you've already established a relationship."

Accessible Plans for the Public and Cross-Sector Use

Ensure that organisational emergency preparedness plans are publicly accessible for accountability and coordination with other sectors.

Illustrative Quote: "I should be able to have access to it. Some people have to find it... It's got to be accessible."

Empowering Emergency Preparedness Through Outreach

Provide targeted outreach and person-centred support to people, including people with disabilities and older adults, to help them prepare for emergencies and reduce the burden on families and carers.

Illustrative Quote: "How can I help her prepare for something like this... but also I think being mindful that families and carers are always the people that have to do these kinds of things."

Service Provider Education and Staff Training

Facilitate training and education for service providers to understand their roles in emergency planning, the specific needs of their clients, and the importance of collaboration with external organisations.

Illustrative Quote: "You're right... with education, what your agency or what your area, your service needs to provide."

Facilitate Cross-Sectoral Collaboration and Coordination

Establish regular forums and workshops to bring together service providers, local governments, emergency services, and community organisations to align emergency plans and ensure coordination.

Illustrative Quote: "Building those relationships with different services... It's rough if the first time you reach out to someone is in that moment of, I need you to do this or this needs to happen."

Discussion Topic 2. Inclusive Planning

Discussion Overview

This discussion focused on embedding person-centred approaches into every phase of emergency management. Participants were provided with the following definition of Inclusive Planning:

- The inclusive planning standard focuses on ensuring that the support requirements of people with disabilities are fully considered in every phase of emergency management. It involves partnering with individuals to co-design emergency plans based on lived experiences and function-based support needs.

These groups were asked to discuss the following:

- What key actions have we taken?
- What are the challenges to our progress?
- What actions could we take to overcome these challenges?
- Who else needs to be involved?
- What tools could we use to get started?

Discussion Topic 2: Key Themes

The themes emerging from the inclusive planning and organisational emergency preparedness discussions demonstrated a strong interconnectedness. The conversations built on each other and were further deepened in subsequent discussions. However, the absence of service providers at the forum influenced the depth of understanding around their roles and potential contributions to inclusive emergency management.

In the inclusive planning discussion, participants frequently referenced Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) as a key approach to achieving inclusive emergency management. While P-CEP is a valuable and structured tool, the discussions suggested that there might be limited understanding of how it can be implemented across different sectors. Participants primarily viewed P-CEP as something to be led by governments or emergency services, rather than recognising it as a framework that could be adopted and driven by service providers, organisations, and communities to support individuals in their emergency preparedness.

For instance, participants described P-CEP as "time-intensive" and suggested it might be unrealistic for governments or emergency services to create detailed, individualised plans for each person in their communities:

- "It's intensive work to tailor-make plans..."

Participants also raised concerns about the challenges of resourcing and sustaining emergency preparedness efforts. They highlighted issues such as narrow grant funding and a lack of clarity about who holds responsibility for inclusive planning:

- "Resourcing was a key one that kept on coming up throughout."
- "A lot of the grants that you get for preparedness are really narrow."

- "There's no one group, agency, person responsible for doing it. It sits across everything."

In both the inclusive planning and organisational emergency preparedness discussions (see **Discussion Topic 1**), it was evident that participants often assumed governments and emergency services bore the primary responsibility for creating inclusive plans and engaging with individuals. Although participants recognised the resource-intensive nature of both P-CEP and broader emergency preparedness efforts, they did not explore in depth how service providers, community organisations, or individuals could play active roles in these processes.

Due to the absence of service providers at the forum, the discussions lacked direct insights into how organisations currently integrate P-CEP or similar frameworks into their practices. Participants did not explicitly consider how service providers might independently adopt P-CEP to develop tailored emergency preparedness plans with their clients. Furthermore, participants expressed uncertainty about the specific responsibilities of service providers in emergency management, which may explain why this topic did not receive deeper exploration.

Inclusive emergency management, however, is a shared responsibility—one that requires collaboration between governments, service providers, community organisations, and individuals. By working together, these stakeholders can collectively build more inclusive and effective emergency preparedness systems. The discussions indicate there is a significant opportunity to provide education and capacity-building to clarify roles and responsibilities, promote collaboration, and empower service providers and communities to contribute to inclusive emergency management efforts.

Education and capacity-building efforts are essential

At the same time, the forum highlighted participants' interest in learning and participating in conversations about emergency preparedness. Many recognised the importance of education and training at different levels - whether for individuals, community groups, service providers, or government agencies.

- "I think they can do it because we have [forums like this] ... And they're all higher-level provider staff, like managers and directors of this and that."
- "With education... [about] what your agency or what your area, your service needs to provide."

Education and capacity-building efforts were seen as essential for addressing the gaps in knowledge and understanding highlighted during these discussions. These efforts could help clarify the roles and responsibilities of service providers, promote the adoption of inclusive frameworks like P-CEP, and encourage collaboration across stakeholders to create a more inclusive and resilient emergency management system.

Funding for Preparedness

Participants discussed several actions to overcome the identified challenges, focusing on improving funding mechanisms, simplifying grant application processes, enhancing community education, developing inclusive policies, and better engaging with service providers and the wider community.

- "More funding in preparedness."
- "Making grants easier."
- "Including inclusive planning principles in high-level policy documents."
- "Community education... starting like, when you're reviewing policy documents, saying, 'Have you thought about people with disabilities?'"
- "We need to start adding [ourselves to] LEMC [Local Emergency Management Committee] ... look at what further subgroups [to engage]."

Broad Stakeholder Involvement

There was a strong consensus on the importance of engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including local governments, service providers, state agencies, and advocacy organisations. Participants emphasised the need to connect different sectors and address systemic challenges collaboratively.

- "Service providers, state, not just DFES. I'm talking about communities, health."
- "How do you connect all of those players that all have competing priorities?"
- "Advocate... that's one of our positions at the moment."
- "Community education... when you're reviewing the policy documents... Have you thought about people with disabilities?"

Accessible Tools and Communication

Participants identified a need for accessible and user-friendly tools to support planning and communication, including digital resources, websites, and physical materials that are inclusive for people with disabilities.

- "It should be a live document or like an online survey."
- "We don't really have easy access. Communications, like when we've gone through the website and all that, it's not like for all abilities."
- "Surveys, consultation, focus groups."
- "Banners and stuff."

Discussion Topic 2: Promising Practices

Several ideas to improve inclusive planning emerged from this discussion.

Engaging Advisory Groups for Community Input

Participants highlighted the importance of engaging with advisory groups, such as the Access and Inclusion Advisory Group, to generate interest and represent diverse voices in emergency planning.

Illustrative Quote: "I went to [the advisory group] before the forums to try and generate interest and stuff and speak about P-CEP."

Implementing and Promoting P-CEP in the Community

The implementation of P-CEP was noted as a significant step towards inclusive emergency preparedness, providing a person-centred approach to planning.

Illustrative Quote: "So us, as a city, we've posted P-CEP [to our Council website]."

Tailoring High-Level Policy Documents to Include Inclusive Principles

Including inclusive planning principles in emergency management policies and state plans was noted as a critical step to ensure systemic consideration of disability support needs.

Illustrative Quote: "Including their inclusive planning principles in high-level policy documents."

Community Education and Awareness Campaigns

Participants emphasised the importance of community education through social media, flyers, and other outreach tools to improve awareness and preparedness.

Illustrative Quote: "Community education... starting like, when you're reviewing policy documents... Have you thought about people with disabilities?"

Simplifying Grant Processes for Preparedness Efforts

Simplifying grant processes and advocating for more preparedness funding were identified as key enablers of inclusive planning.

Illustrative Quote: "Making grants easier... the acquittal stuff... we just go pay our own way and do our own thing because it's easier."

Discussion Topic 3: Strategic Partnerships

Discussion Overview

This facilitated discussion focused on building collaborative networks across sectors to drive inclusive practices. They were provided with the following definition of Strategic Partnerships,

- The strategic partnerships standard focuses on collaboration across sectors (e.g., government, service providers, disability advocates, and communities). It's about identifying roles, enhancing organisational preparedness, and integrating the strengths of diverse stakeholders into emergency plans.

These groups were asked to discuss the following:

- What key actions have we taken?
- What are the challenges to our progress?
- What actions could we take to overcome these challenges?
- If Time Permits:
 - Who else needs to be involved?
 - What tools could we use to get started?

Discussion Topic 3: Key Themes

The strategic partnerships discussion reveals the participants' deep commitment to fostering cross-sector collaboration to enhance disability-inclusive emergency planning. The discussion captured a diversity of perspectives, including those of individuals with lived experience, local government representatives, and community advocates. This range of views enriched the understanding of what is needed for effective strategic partnerships. The

dialogue focused on building connections between organisations, identifying and addressing gaps in community services, and promoting awareness and education (see Topics 1 and 2).

Existing Strategic Partnerships and Actions Taken

Participants identified key actions that have been taken to foster strategic partnerships, including forming and utilising local networks such as the Access and Inclusion Reference Group and the Community Services Working Group. These groups play a significant role in identifying gaps in the community and advocating for additional services.

- "The city of Kwinana has access inclusion, reference group and community services working group, and that helps to identify gaps."
- "Last year alone, due to it, we got 17 extra organisations working in Kwinana. Some of them would have been in Rockingham, but servicing Kwinana."

Challenges to Strategic Partnerships

A key challenge identified was the lack of awareness about the need for disability-inclusive emergency planning at all levels—individuals, organisations, and the community at large. Additionally, participants noted the difficulties of fostering effective partnerships due to competing priorities among stakeholders and organisations.

- "Individual, community, and organisational lack of awareness."
- "People's lack of awareness... you're getting an individual that has no idea, then you'll get a company or organisation that has no idea."
- "How do you connect all of those players that all have competing priorities?"

Actions to Overcome Challenges

The group proposed several actions to address challenges in building strategic partnerships, such as strengthening advocacy networks, holding workshops, and creating opportunities for lived experience narratives to inform and engage stakeholders effectively.

- "Develop advocacy networks or strengthen our advocacy networks."
- "Hold workshops... information sessions, all of that."
- "Getting that [community services group] to have people with lived experience coming in on why we need this. How important it is."
- "Local people tell the importance of why this needs to be... You're going to have that impact a lot more."

Importance of Including People with Lived Experience

A recurring theme was the vital importance of including people with lived experience in both the planning and implementation of emergency preparedness initiatives. Participants noted that their stories and perspectives could drive meaningful change and help ensure that plans are truly inclusive.

- "What about those who don't have service providers, who live somewhat independently? My daughter is classified as my carer, so I don't have a service provider."
- "Who else needs to be involved? People with lived experience."

- "How do we get the information to people... but you can't, and how do we help them to [plan]?"

Strengthening Communication and Awareness

Participants saw improved communication and awareness as critical to building effective partnerships. They proposed using workshops, practical information sessions, and community-oriented education to engage stakeholders at all levels and foster better understanding of inclusive emergency preparedness.

- "Workshops, events, all that sort of thing to help."
- "Availability of information... information, the extras, all of that."
- "You're talking about doing these... workshops to start to do some of that kind of work, to figure out what the gaps are."
- "Communicating... holding workshops [and] practical workshops to figure out what the gaps are."

Mapping Community Resources and Services

Participants discussed mapping local resources and services as a tool to enhance collaboration and preparedness. This included identifying evacuation centres, local assets, and the demographic composition of the community to ensure effective and inclusive responses in emergencies.

- "Mapping facilities... just say if Kwinana had a big fire, SJ and Rockingham burned, we'd be the backups and the facilities are already there."
- "Mapping your demographic... the diversity... it changes all the time."
- "You'd map potential evacuation, things that could be turned into... places like schools, pavilions... large spaces."

Discussion Topic 3: Promising Practices

These promising practices showcase the potential for leveraging partnerships, community resources, and lived experience to advance disability-inclusive emergency management. They demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation at the local level.

Leveraging Community Networks to Identify Gaps and Advocate for Services

The Access and Inclusion Reference Group and the Community Services Working Group were highlighted as crucial networks that bring together numerous local organisations to identify community needs and advocate for addressing them.

Illustrative Quote: "Last year alone, due to it, we got 17 extra organisations working in Kwinana."

Including Lived Experience in Emergency Preparedness Planning and Advocacy

Involving people with lived experience in workshops and advocacy initiatives was identified as critical to ensuring that emergency plans are inclusive and relevant to the needs of the disability community.

Illustrative Quote: "What about those who don't have service providers, who live somewhat independently? My daughter is classified as my carer, so I don't have a service provider."

Practical Workshops for Stakeholder Engagement

Practical workshops focusing on disaster preparedness and addressing community gaps were seen as an effective tool to foster partnerships and increase awareness across communities and organisations.

Illustrative Quote: "Practical workshops to start to do some of that kind of work, to figure out what the gaps are."

Mapping Community Assets and Demographics

Mapping local resources, facilities, and demographic information was suggested as a valuable tool to enable informed and effective planning for emergencies.

Illustrative Quote: "Mapping facilities... just say if Kwinana had a big fire, [name of community] and Rockingham burned, we'd be the backups and the facilities are already there."

Discussion Topic 4: Accessible Resourcing

Discussion Overview

This discussion topic focused on ensuring equitable allocation and deployment of resources to meet accessibility needs. They were provided with the following definition of Accessible Resourcing.

- The accessible resourcing standard ensures the effective pre-planning and deployment of both tangible (e.g., transport, shelters) and intangible (e.g., knowledge, skills) resources to address the needs of people with disabilities at all stages of emergencies.

These groups were asked to discuss the following:

- What key actions have we taken?
- What are the challenges to our progress?
- What actions could we take to overcome these challenges?
- If Time Permits:
 - Who else needs to be involved?
 - What tools could we use to get started?

This discussion topic included prompts about Inclusive and Accessible Evacuation Support Options to centre the discussion on identifying supports that enable safe, dignified, and inclusive evacuations. Prompts included:

- Apart from emergency services, what other support options are available to help people with disabilities evacuate and find shelter safely during a disaster?
- How can these supports ensure that people with disability can make their own choices, are respected, and result in them being safe and included?
- Consider and discuss how these resources can specifically support people with disability:
 - People and Knowledge (Intangible Assets): Think about the knowledge, skills, networks, and capabilities related to disability that could improve access and inclusion at all stages of a disaster.
 - Resources (Tangible Assets): Identify physical resources that could assist, such as vehicles with accessibility features or accommodations that are disability friendly.

Discussion Topic 4: Key Themes

The three conversations on accessible resourcing provides an understanding of the challenges, systemic barriers, and potential solutions for creating inclusive and effective emergency responses for people with disabilities. Participants highlighted the need for a multi-faceted and community-driven approach. They explored the tangible and intangible resources necessary to support people with disabilities and how these resources could be mobilised inclusively. The balance between personal autonomy and safety during evacuation was a recurring topic, as was the role of local government, service providers, and communities.

Challenges in Transportation and Evacuation

Across all three discussions, transportation was highlighted as a critical challenge for people with disabilities during emergencies. The conversations revealed various obstacles, including limited access to accessible transport options, reliance on others for transportation, and the lack of pre-identified and locally available resources. The importance of planning transport arrangements prior to the escalation of emergencies was emphasised.

- "I don't think it's about the facility they're going to; it's about how they get out from where they are to where they're going."
- "So, for example, their hip may fall out of joint... So, they can't go in a vehicle that leaves like a maxi cab. They're often quite rough, or they may not turn up."

The Role of Communication in Accessible Resourcing

The need for effective communication strategies was a common theme. Participants noted that current communication efforts often fail to reach their intended audiences, particularly marginalised and vulnerable individuals. Issues such as inaccessible formats, language barriers, and a lack of direct, person-centred outreach were raised. Participants acknowledged that service providers, community networks, and local governments need to improve how they inform and educate people about disaster preparedness and evacuation procedures.

- "What was really surprising to me was that you should receive a phone call to say, 'Sorry, we're cutting your services.' But there was no conversation about, 'How are you going to be okay? What do you need?'"
- "Even when we think we're doing the right thing... we're actually missing quite fundamental things."

The Need for Person-Centred and Flexible Planning

A recurring theme across all three discussions was the need for personalised and flexible emergency planning. Participants emphasised that a "one size fits all" approach is insufficient for people with diverse needs, and instead, plans must account for individual circumstances, preferences, and challenges. Additionally, participants discussed the importance of involving individuals in their own planning to ensure plans are effective and respected.

- "Each person is different. You can't blanket the evacuation process for a lot of the people."

- "Making sure that you don't say, 'Well, you've said, I don't want to leave, so I'm just going to leave you.' You're making sure that you have that ability to allow people to make the choice, but when they don't, being able to make that choice for them to ensure that they're safe."
- "Emergency resourcing is a lot of individual stuff, but that's not actually possible for the vast majority of people in our community."

Systemic Barriers and Gaps in Accessible Resourcing

Systemic barriers, such as resource limitations, short-term funding cycles, and the fragmentation of services under the NDIS, were frequently mentioned. Participants noted that many service providers, particularly smaller ones, lack the capacity to conduct comprehensive emergency planning. The disappearance of local support organisations due to systemic changes, such as the introduction of the NDIS, has exacerbated gaps in emergency resourcing.

- "Now with the NDIS, you've got lots of little providers that have popped up that probably don't have the resources to create all those things..."
- "To actually have these conversations in community... you expose a lot of gaps, and we don't have anything to resolve them."

The Power of Local Networks and Community-Driven Solutions

The value of local networks and hyperlocal initiatives in improving emergency preparedness emerged strongly across all three discussions. Programmes like "Street-by-Street" were highlighted as effective ways to connect people within communities, foster trust, and ensure support is available during emergencies.

- "It has to be hyper-local; it has to be people in the neighbourhood that you can regularly connect to."
- "In Kwinana, they do their support street parties... One of the things that we can do with those existing structures is put a disaster lens."

Addressing Diverse Needs and Marginalised Populations

The discussions highlighted the need to account for the diverse needs of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, such as rough sleepers and transient populations. Participants noted that these groups often lack access to communication, resources, and support networks, making them particularly vulnerable during emergencies.

- "We haven't even talked about the displaced or the rough sleepers that might be suffering in that space too... They might not have access to that communication."
- "A lot of people with disabilities... their community is online, especially [inaudible] folk. Right? So, folks that are not mobile, folks that can't travel to places, folks that are poor..."

Discussion Topic 4: Promising Practices

Several ideas were raised as promising practices within this discussion topic.

Proactive Identification of Accessible Transport Resources

Create and maintain a catalogue of accessible transportation options, including ride-sharing services, local bus routes, neighbours with vehicles, and community transport services.

Illustrative Quote: "If you're someone that can't drive, is there someone close who has a bigger vehicle that could potentially take a few other individuals?"

Inclusive and Personalised Communication Strategies

Develop communication plans that are tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities, ensuring information is accessible, timely, and provided in various formats.

Illustrative Quote: "Ensure they've got all the information... if they have family that has access to that, for someone that perhaps may not be able to make that decision on their own."

Hyper-local Community Initiatives

Leverage hyperlocal programmes, such as "Street-by-Street," to build neighbourhood-based support networks and foster preparedness discussions in a trusted environment.

Illustrative Quote: "We door-knock that street and say, 'Next week, we're coming to your street.'"

Tailored Emergency Plans that Respect Autonomy

Emergency plans should be individually tailored, balancing respect for personal choice with the responsibility of ensuring safety for those unable to make decisions in emergencies.

Illustrative Quote: "Each person is different. You can't blanket the evacuation process for a lot of the people."

Improved Training and Policies for Care Staff

Ensure care staff receive training and have clear guidelines on how to act during emergencies, particularly balancing their professional responsibilities with personal emergencies.

Illustrative Quote: "If you have a situation where you're in an emergency, and you've got someone who's caring for you, they're also in an emergency, and their family."

Addressing Marginalised and Transient Populations

Integrate strategies to support rough sleepers, transient individuals, and marginalised groups into emergency plans, and ensure they have access to resources and support.

Illustrative Quote: "We haven't even talked about the displaced or the rough sleepers that might be suffering in that space too... They might not have access to that communication."

Collaboration Between Providers and Local Governments

Foster mutual aid agreements and partnerships between service providers, local governments, and community organisations to ensure coordinated and comprehensive emergency responses.

Illustrative Quote: "A mutual aid agreement between [service providers] ... to address the gaps and ensure coordination."

Next Steps

The next steps for the research team include facilitating Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning forums and producing summary reports for each host and their participants. These efforts will involve synthesising lessons learned across Australia and presenting them in a comprehensive synthesis report. This broader analysis will help the team provide informed recommendations to guide future improvements, identify priorities for action and support, and promote nation-wide consistency in advancing Disability Inclusive Emergency Management.

In the meantime, readers are encouraged to use this report as a practical resource, critically engaging with its insights to leverage current opportunities and identify additional stakeholders to enhance inclusive emergency management planning and risk reduction initiatives. By fostering collaboration and expanding participation, we can collectively strengthen the foundations for disability-inclusive emergency management.

We encourage all readers to access the freely available [DIEM Toolkit and eLearning resources](#) to further their own knowledge and take meaningful actions toward Disability Inclusive Emergency Management. These resources are designed to support organisations and communities in building the knowledge and skills needed to drive inclusive practices and enhance resilience in partnership with people with disability. By engaging with these tools, you can play a role in advancing inclusive emergency management across Australia. Access the DIEM Toolkit and eLearning resources here: <https://www.nema.gov.au/our-work/resilience/diem>

List of Participating Organisations

- 1 Climate Justice Union
- 2 City of Kwinana, Access and Inclusion Reference Group
- 3 City of Kwinana
- 4 Dept. of Fires and Emergency Services WA
- 5 WA Local Government Association (WALGA)



Image: a group of people assessing their inclusive emergency management maturity

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