



Save the Children
Australia

Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements

Save the Children Australia

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About Save the Children

Save the Children is a leading independent international organisation for children and child rights. Our vision is of a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation. Our purpose is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. We work towards this vision in more than 120 countries across the globe.

1. Executive Summary

Save the Children Australia (SCA) provides this submission in response to the Productivity Commission's Public Inquiry into the efficacy of current national natural disaster funding arrangements (*the Inquiry*). This submission focuses on the options to achieve an effective and sustainable balance of natural disaster recovery and mitigation to build the resilience of communities, in particular children.

A focus on better equipping individuals, families and communities to prepare for, respond to, and cope with the effects of natural disasters will build broad community resilience. Currently the focus of funding and practice is on the response phase of emergencies and disasters. However, it is expected that climate change will affect Australia with more severe heatwaves, fires, floods and storms.¹ As a result, we must increasingly focus on mitigation and preparedness. Building community capacity should encompass developing knowledge of local risks, engagement in emergency planning and mitigation activities and a sound understanding of protective actions that can be taken by individuals and communities.

This submission is informed by SCA's expertise working with children and families in disaster and emergency situations. SCA works with children following fires, floods and cyclones in Australia and has first-hand knowledge of the harmful impact of emergencies on children. Our staff also work with children whose lives have been devastated by emergencies and disasters in many countries around the world. In many situations, SCA is a leading organisation in providing education in emergencies and child centred disaster risk reduction (CC-DRR). Our work in emergencies also focuses on specific responses to disasters for children. SCA has operated Child Friendly Spaces in evacuation centres in five Australian states during natural disasters.

As a result of this work, SCA has observed the importance of building disaster resilience and preparedness amongst children. Disaster education is a key avenue for building this capacity, which in turn builds capacity in families and communities. To this end, Save the Children works at an international and national level to implement the Comprehensive School Safety framework, which aims to strengthen disaster resilience through education.

The Australian school curriculum contains many opportunities to further disaster education and resilience building for children. This is very positive and should be maintained and expanded across all levels of schooling, particularly because schools and children are linked to families and the broader community. In addition, there are ways to engage and consult with children and young people so that they can have a say in emergency management policy, plans and programs that affect them. This can also result in the development of improved responses that better consider the needs of children. In this regard, SCA is of the view that there are a number of steps that can be taken to better incorporate the needs of children and young people in existing emergency management strategies and arrangements.

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 'Special Report: Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX)' (2011). See also: Tom Arup, 'Australia more vulnerable but prepared: says UN Climate Chief', Sydney Morning Herald (17 May 2011).

Accordingly, SCA makes the following recommendations:

1. The Australian school curriculum should maintain its existing focus on aspects of disaster education across different subject areas (i.e. science, geography, history and health and PE). These learning areas should embed content that is directed towards improving student resilience to emergencies and preparedness for disasters by providing hazard and risk knowledge along with education that will enhance overall student wellbeing both physically and psychologically. A clear link in the curriculum with informal education programs like those provided by emergency service organisations would also strengthen disaster resilience education opportunities.
2. Disaster resilience learnings should also be incorporated in the existing curriculum (for example through Mathematics and English) for the early years up to grade 4.
3. Develop a national day of disaster preparedness; a dedicated annual day in the education curriculum where schools work with emergency service organisations and local governments to run education activities on planning, preparing and building community capacity to respond to natural disasters and emergencies. This would be a Federal initiative that is implemented and led by school communities.
4. The Federal government should establish youth councils, such as that developed by FEMA in the United States, for the purpose of engaging children and young people in emergency management planning, preparedness and disaster resilience building.
5. The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience should be reviewed to explicitly address the unique needs of children, recognising their capacity to contribute to building broader community resilience.
6. The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements should be revised so that States are supported to develop and implement disaster mitigation strategies that enhance community resilience and preparedness, with a particular focus on building capacity of children which, in turn, influences families and the wider community.
7. The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements Guideline 4 should be revised to include activities and programs that specifically address the needs of children and young people; for example, Child Friendly Spaces in evacuation centres.

2. Introduction

Globally the incidence and severity of natural disasters is increasing and children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of emergencies.² Half the people either affected or killed by disasters are children, and children between the ages of 0-8 years are the most affected group in today's global emergencies. Natural disasters have immediate, medium and long term impacts on children, including developmental, social, familial and educational impacts, as well as impacts on their wellbeing and mental health.³ Children need tailored support to ensure that their needs are not overlooked in emergency response and recovery.

Each year many Australians are faced with natural disasters such as floods, bushfires, cyclones and storms as well as other catastrophic events.⁴ These natural disasters are part of the Australian landscape and will continue to be a reality for many Australians for years to come.⁵ Given the disaster prone environment many Australians live in, and the harmful impact of these disasters, there is recognition of the need to increase community resilience to disasters.

With the threat of climate change no longer a distant issue, but firmly in the present, Australia will face even more severe heatwaves, fires, floods and storms.⁶ As a result, we need to start preparing ahead of time to be ready when disasters strike. This will require greater investment in proactive initiatives that build community capacity and resilience before catastrophes hit. There should also be a more targeted focus on building disaster resilience in children. The need to focus on mitigation and preparedness has been recognised by President Obama in the United States, where government committed \$1 billion in federal aid to push states and cities to prepare ahead of time for the impact of climate change.⁷

As recent disasters like the Victorian Black Saturday Bushfires have demonstrated, children suffer long term effects both emotionally and educationally. For example, the staff at Yea High School see the ongoing impact of the fires in:

- The difficulty some students have in settling and engaging with their studies.
- Anxiety in coming to grips with the uncertainty and challenge of growing into a young person.

² Ibid; and Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Children Vulnerable To Disaster-Related Stress* (8 December 2012), available at - <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2012/12/08/children-vulnerable-disaster-related-stress>; and Davie, S., *Don't leave me alone. Protecting children in Australian disasters and emergencies. Government report card on emergency management planning*, 2013; and Peek, L., *Children and Disasters: Understanding Vulnerabilities, Developing Capacities, and Promoting Resilience - An Introduction*. Children, Youth and Environments, 2008. 18(1): p. 1-29.

³ Lisa Gibbs, Melissa Di Pietro, Greg Ireton, Samantha Mordech, Michelle Roberts, Joanne Sinclair and Ruth Wraith, 'Core principles for a community based approach to supporting child disaster recovery', 29(1), *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2014) 17.

⁴ Lisa Gibbs, Melissa Di Pietro, Greg Ireton, Samantha Mordech, Michelle Roberts, Joanne Sinclair and Ruth Wraith, 'Core principles for a community based approach to supporting child disaster recovery', 29(1), *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2014) 17.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 'Special Report: Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX)' (2011); and Maria Gallucci, 'Obama Climate Change: President Announces \$1 Billion Climate 'Resilience' Fund To Help Communities Prepare For Natural Disasters', *International Business Times* (16 June 2014). See also: Tom Arup, 'Australia more vulnerable but prepared: says UN Climate Chief', *Sydney Morning Herald* (17 May 2011).

⁷ Maria Gallucci, 'Obama Climate Change: President Announces \$1 Billion Climate 'Resilience' Fund To Help Communities Prepare For Natural Disasters', *International Business Times* (16 June 2014).

- Transitioning from small primary school learning communities to the larger and more distant secondary school environment.
- The significant gaps in learning as a result of the impact of trauma on capacity to learn.
- The struggle some students can encounter when seeking to develop a pathway post-secondary school.⁸

Given the potential for long term negative effects of disasters on children it is essential that resilience and mitigation strategies are tailored to their unique needs.

⁸ *Smouldering Stump - Yea High School*. [cited 2014 19 February]; Available from: <http://www.yeahs.vic.edu.au/News--Events/Smouldering-Stump/>.

3. Developing disaster resilience through engaging with schools

The significant role of education in creating a culture of safety, preparedness and resilience in response to natural disasters has been acknowledged at an international level. In 2005, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) was adopted by 168 governments at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. One of the key priorities of the HFA is to 'use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety at all levels' and an indicator of achievement of that priority is the 'inclusion of disaster risk reduction knowledge in relevant sections of school curricula at all levels.'⁹ Consistent with this, through its international development work across the globe Save the Children is working towards an international framework for disaster risk reduction by bridging development and humanitarian action in the education sector. Along with a number of other non-government organisations, Save the Children has developed a Comprehensive School Safety booklet, which sets out three pillars for achieving school safety in hazardous situations and strengthening disaster resilience through education.¹⁰

There is substantial research that highlights the benefits of disaster education programs and the value in building community resilience and emergency preparedness has also been recognised by the international community and by Australian governments.¹¹ These education programs can be both formal and informal, with the central aim 'to increase young people's resilience to disasters, helping them to prepare so that they, and their families, might respond and recover more effectively.'¹² Importantly, disaster education in schools is seen as building individual and community capacity and resilience because young people link into the family setting, which in turn links into community settings.¹³

Disaster education in schools can build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels and schools are essential venues through which to forge durable collective values.¹⁴ However, this need not require a restructuring of the school curriculum. Disaster education and resilience building activities can be embedded in existing learning and school programs that are linked to relevant curriculum as it currently stands.

Developing hazard knowledge and building capacity to cope with emergencies and disasters in Australia's student population will ensure that children, young people, families and whole communities are more resilient and able to cope when disasters occur. Ensuring adequate disaster resilience education in the Australian curriculum is therefore an important investment in promoting community safety. This investment is essential, given the increasing prevalence of natural disasters in Australia.

⁹ Fumiyo Kagawa and David Selby, 'Ready for the Storm: Education for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation' *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development* 6 (2012), 209. See also UNISDR, *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*. 2005.

¹⁰ Save the Children, *Comprehensive School Safety*

¹¹ Ronan, K. and B. Towers, *Systems Education for a Sustainable Planet: Preparing Children for Natural Disasters*. Systems, (2014) 3.

¹² Ronan, K. and B. Towers, *Systems Education for a Sustainable Planet: Preparing Children for Natural Disasters*. Systems, (2014) 2.

¹³ Neil Dufty, 'Opportunities for disaster resilience learning in the Australian Curriculum' 29(1) *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2014) 12.

¹⁴ Neil Dufty, 'Opportunities for disaster resilience learning in the Australian Curriculum' 29(1) *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2014) 12.

Schools also have an important role to play in community connectedness and are the center of an important trusted information network within communities. Children can become involved in many areas of community preparedness and children should be supported to gain knowledge that will assist them to make positive contributions in this regard to their families and the wider community.¹⁵

Providing education opportunities that teach students about hazards and how to prepare for them is a positive way to ensure that students are not overwhelmed or feel defeated by the inevitability of disasters occurring and affecting their lives. A proactive approach can also encourage children's involvement in action based emergency preparedness planning which has a positive benefit because it provides students with knowledge to take action that can protect them from hazards, this knowledge is taken into their adult lives and assists in building wider community resilience. This can be done at school by active participation of students in emergency drills. It can also be achieved by partnering with emergency service organisations to highlight the relevance of what children are learning at school.

Case study 1: Beechworth CFA

An example of a school and emergency service partnership was reported on the Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA) website with a story from Beechworth, Victoria, where the CFA engaged with students at their school. Parents reported that children came home from school wanting to discuss their family's fire plans and teachers were impressed that the program had links to the school curriculum.¹⁶ The Beechworth story is a good example of a local emergency service organisation working in partnership with a school to teach children about disaster preparedness that addresses specific risks in their locality.

Case study 2: Li'l Larikkins

An example of a national disaster education program, that is not regionally specific, is the Li'l Larikkins resources and education program developed by State Emergency Service (SES) organisations. The Li'l Larikkins program teaches children from around Australia about storms, floods, cyclones and tsunamis.¹⁷

These examples highlight the positive contribution that can be made by children and school communities to build community resilience to natural disasters. However current natural disaster funding does not focus on the community resilience and capacity building that can be undertaken with students and their families through schools. A greater focus on funding programs that prepare communities for disasters by engaging with students and their families would be an effective way to build community resilience to future disasters.

¹⁵ Ronan, K. and D. Johnston, *Promoting Community Resilience in Disasters. The role for schools, youth and families.*

¹⁶ CFA. *Beechworth kids are fire safe kids.* 2013 30 September 2013]; Available from:

http://news.cfa.vic.gov.au/news/beechworth-kids-are-fire-safe-kids.html?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter.

¹⁷ Australian Council of State Emergency Services *Li'l Larikkins Schools Resources Kits.* [cited 2014 26 February 2014]; Available from: <http://www.ses.org.au/212065.html?3>

The Australian school curriculum

Recent bushfire inquiries have highlighted the need to educate children in relation to disaster risk and preparedness, with both the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission and the 2011 Perth Hills Bushfire Inquiry making recommendations to include bushfire education in the curriculum.¹⁸ Recommendation 6 of the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission recommends that Victoria lead an initiative of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs to ensure that the national curriculum incorporates the history of bushfire in Australia and that existing curriculum areas such as geography, science and environmental studies include elements of bushfire education. Recommendation 10 of the 2011 Perth Hills Bushfire Inquiry recommends that the Department of Education oversee the provision of bushfire education in schools that are located in bushfire prone areas, ensuring that *all* schools in these areas incorporate key bushfire messages in their curriculum. While these recommendations are specific to bushfire disasters they highlight the need for general disaster education in the school curriculum. Ensuring that the students are educated regarding the history and risks of natural hazards should not be limited to bushfires but must encompass all hazards.

Currently the geography, science, health and physical education and history subjects all contain opportunities for disaster resilience learning for Australian students.¹⁹ These opportunities are available in upper primary and secondary years. The geography curriculum contains subject matter that focuses on bushfire, flood, atmospheric hazards, hydrological hazards, geomorphological hazard and climate change. The science curriculum provides a focus on geological changes and extreme weather and the cause and impact of the earth's weather. History studies include the Black Death plague and environmental disasters like Chernobyl. The health and PE curriculum opportunities relate to personal resilience in adversity, safety measures in emergencies and decision making for safety.²⁰ It is possible that there may be other opportunities for strengthening disaster resilience learning in the curriculum, for example through Civics and Citizenship programs (years 3 – 10), which may include capacity building through 'active citizenship' and volunteering.²¹ Accordingly, the existing curriculum provides a number of development opportunities for disaster resilience learning in the upper primary and secondary years.

The Beechworth example also highlights that the curriculum is also flexible enough to enable informal learnings to be integrated through schools working with emergency service organisations. While it is important that children learn about risks and hazards that are specific to where they live, it is also important that they learn about hazards that they may encounter in contexts outside of their local area (for example, if they are on holiday). The Li'l Larikins program is a national resource that could be incorporated and taught through the existing curriculum.

¹⁸ 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission Report. [cited 2014 19 February]; Available from: <http://www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/Commission-Reports>; and Perth Hills Bushfire Inquiry. [cited 2014 20 February]; Available from: <http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/public-administration/sector-performance-and-oversight/reviews-investigations-and-special-inquiries/special-inquiries/perth-hills-bushfire-inquiry>.

¹⁹ Neil Dufty, 'Opportunities for disaster resilience learning in the Australian Curriculum' 29(1) *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2014) 16.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Neil Dufty, 'Opportunities for disaster resilience learning in the Australian Curriculum' 29(1) *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2014) 16.

Presently, there are limited opportunities within the curriculum to enhance resilience in the early years up to grade 4. This is a gap should be addressed; the focus on disaster resilience learning in the upper primary and secondary years should be expanded to apply across all levels of schooling.

Children can take on safety messages at an early age and have been shown to be quite capable of learning about risk in ways that promote emotional and physical resilience. Children who participate in disaster preparedness programs also have a more realistic risk perception and increased knowledge of appropriate safety behaviors.²² There are currently lost opportunities in the early years of children's education to include curriculum content that will lay a foundation for sound hazard and risk knowledge. This can be easily addressed by incorporating disaster resilience learnings in the existing curriculum for the early years up to grade 4. For example, disaster education could be integrated into the English curriculum content by including stories or novels that cover disasters or emergencies. It can also be incorporated into Mathematics programs by linking disaster knowledge to areas like spatial reasoning, interpreting and drawing conclusions from data and using measurement. This knowledge can also be included in extra-curricular activities such as talks and presentations by emergency services organisations.²³

A clear link in the curriculum with informal education programs like those provided by emergency service organisations would also strengthen disaster resilience education opportunities. Many of these existing programs are appropriate for younger students, for example the *Stop, Drop Roll and Get down low and go, go, go* fire education that is delivered by fire agencies to school students.

There is also an opportunity to develop a broader, consistent and more coordinated approach to improving disaster education throughout Australia. A new Federal initiative, such as a national day of preparedness would serve to build the capacity of children, families and communities to be better prepared and resilient in the face of disasters and emergencies. This might involve a national focused campaign that is implemented at a grass roots level and led by school communities.

A national day of disaster preparedness

In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly resolved to establish an International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction to occur on the second Wednesday of October each year. This day would be observed during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 1990-1999. In 2009, the name was changed to the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) and 13 October was the date chosen to observe this day. Raising awareness of how communities are taking action to reduce their risk to disasters is the primary aim of the day.²⁴

The IDRR has initiated a process for encouraging every person and government to take part in building more disaster resilient communities and nations, and has received significant recognition and support by the United Nations. For example, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has noted that "*Vulnerability to disaster is growing faster than resilience. [...] Disaster risk reduction*

²² Ronan, K. and B. Towers, *Systems Education for a Sustainable Planet: Preparing Children for Natural Disasters*. Systems, 2014, 2.

²³ Neil Dufty, 'Opportunities for disaster resilience learning in the Australian Curriculum' 29(1) *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (2014) 16.

²⁴ UNITED NATIONS. 2013. *International Day for Disaster Reduction*. Available from: <http://www.un.org/en/events/disasterreductionday/>

should be an everyday concern for everybody. Let us all invest today for a safer tomorrow" .²⁵

Adopting a national day of disaster preparedness with a focus on engaging with educational settings can ensure that children from across Australia are engaged in preparedness in a targeted way. Further, a national day of disaster preparedness provides Australia with a platform to promote individual, family and community preparedness that can focus on developing awareness and enhance preparedness consistent with locally based risks and hazards. Additionally, a national day of disaster preparedness provides an opportunity to engage and empower individuals and can promote community responsibility to address risk reduction and preparedness.

Case study 3: New Zealand's ShakeOut

An example of a national campaign is New Zealand's largest ever earthquake preparedness campaign, New Zealand ShakeOut, which was carried out in 2012 with great success. The pinnacle of the campaign was a nation-wide Drop, Cover and Hold earthquake drill. Approximately, 1.34 million people were registered to participate in the drill, which is approximately 30 per cent of New Zealand's population. One of the main objectives of the campaign was to have people throughout New Zealand understand the right actions to take in an earthquake – Drop, Cover and Hold. People were also encouraged to look closely at their emergency preparedness, and as a result many businesses and organisations developed, reviewed or tested their emergency plans and families developed and/or tested their household emergency plans.²⁶

An Australian day of disaster preparedness with close links to schools could focus communities on developing and testing emergency plans at a family, business and community level. This could be an all hazards campaign with a focus on local hazards or could have a different theme each year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Australian school curriculum should maintain its existing focus on aspects of disaster education across different subject areas (i.e. science, geography, history and health and PE). These learning areas should embed content that is directed towards improving student resilience to emergencies and preparedness for disasters by providing hazard and risk knowledge along with education that will enhance overall student wellbeing both physically and psychologically. A clear link in the curriculum with informal education programs like those provided by emergency service organisations would also strengthen disaster resilience education opportunities.
- Disaster resilience learnings should also be incorporated in the existing curriculum (for example through Mathematics and English) for the early years up to grade 4.
- Develop a national day of preparedness; a dedicated annual day in the school year where schools work with emergency service organisations and local governments to run educational activities on planning, preparing and building community capacity to respond

²⁵ UNITED NATIONS. 2013. *Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School*. Available from: <http://www.unisdr.org/2007/campaign/iddr/2006-iddr.htm>

²⁶ Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management. 2013. New Zealand Shake Out 2012 Final Report.

to natural disasters and emergencies. This would be a Federal initiative that is implemented and led at a local level by school communities throughout the country.

4. Child Centred Disaster Risk Reduction

There is increasing evidence that highlights the capacity of children and young people to be active participants in disaster risk reduction and other emergency management activities.²⁷ The importance of this has been recognised by the new federally funded Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre project which focuses on building best practice in CC-DRR.²⁸ The outcomes of this project will provide disaster resilience researchers, policy makers and practitioners with an evidence base for the development of effective CC-DRR programming in Australia. Importantly, this evidence will inform further development and enhancement of current emergency management preparedness activities.

When children participate in emergency management activities there are a number of benefits. Children can take on safety messages at an early age and have been shown to be quite capable of learning about risk in ways that promote emotional and physical resilience. In addition, children who participate in disaster preparedness programs have more realistic risk perception and increased knowledge of appropriate safety behaviors.²⁹ Child participation also enhances the development of policy, plans and programs for the entire community.

It is therefore important that children and young people have a say in community emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation. This engagement also actively promotes children's human rights. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that *children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.*³⁰ Natural disaster mitigation activities will have a long lasting effect on the lives of children and they should have a say in planning and contributing to these activities by adopting a child participatory approach.

Child participation is a planned inclusive activity where children are appropriately, safely, actively and voluntarily involved in decision-making about the design, development, implementation or evaluation and monitoring of a project or program.³¹ For example children can participate by identifying need, prioritising mitigation activities or development of their feedback and evaluation processes.

Children's participation can broadly be categorised into the following three approaches:

- **Consultative:** children are well informed about what is happening and why. They might also be consulted about project ideas to check that the interventions are right for them. Children's involvement is valuable but remains quite passive.

²⁷ Ronan, K. and D. Johnston, *Promoting Community Resilience in Disasters. The role for schools, youth and families*; Peek, L., *Recognising the vulnerability and capacities of young people*. Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 2014. **29**(1); and Towers, B., et al., *Child-centred disaster risk reduction in Australia: progress, gaps and opportunities*. Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 2014. **29**(1).

²⁸ *Bushfire and Natural Hazard Collaborative Research Centre*. [cited 2014 19 February]; Available from: <http://www.bnhcrc.com.au/Research/Resilient-People-Infrastructure-and-Institutions>.

²⁹ Ronan, K. and B. Towers, *Systems Education for a Sustainable Planet: Preparing Children for Natural Disasters*. Systems, 2014. **2**.

³⁰ *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. 2013 [accessed on 20 February 2014]; Available from: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>.

³¹ Save the Children, *Practice Standards in Children's Participation* (2005).

- **Children collaborate and/or share decision-making with adults:** Children collaborate with adults and share decision-making with them. This can be an adult-initiated or a child-initiated approach, but adults and children respect one another and are equal stakeholders in the work.
- **Child-led initiatives:** Children take the lead and initiate their own projects. They may seek support or guidance from adults, but this is optional.

SCA has expertise and experience in facilitating child participatory approaches regarding programs for children and recommends a collaborative child participatory approach to allow children to have a say in disaster resilience and disaster mitigation planning and activities. This will enhance understanding of risks within communities and encourage active participation in shared decision making by government, emergency service organisations and the broader community regarding disaster mitigation strategies.

A focus on CC-DRR will enhance community preparedness and resilience to disasters. The development of a standard approach to engaging with children across all communities in Australia will ensure that children not only gain a greater understanding of the risks of natural disasters but are able to contribute to mitigation and planning activities. Most importantly this would be an investment that results in long term behavioural change as children grow into adults with a better understanding of what individuals, families and communities can do to ensure that they are resilient in the event of natural disasters.

Youth Councils

The value of giving young people the opportunity to contribute to emergency preparedness and disaster resilience building has been recognised by the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (*FEMA*) with the establishment of the FEMA Youth Preparedness Council in 2012. The FEMA Youth Council brings together youth leaders from across the United States that are interested in advocating on behalf of youth preparedness and making a difference in their communities. Each council member completes a self-selected legacy project during his or their term on the council. Council members also participate in a Youth Preparedness Council Summit, where they share their ideas, opinions and questions about youth disaster preparedness with the leadership of national organisations.

FEMA recognise that disaster planning, response, and recovery efforts must take into account the unique needs that children have. It is also acknowledged that children bring many unique strengths to emergency preparedness. For example:

- **Children are positive influencers.** Educators and social researchers agree that children can effectively bring the message of preparedness home to their families.
- **Children can become leaders.** By participating in youth preparedness programs, children are empowered to become leaders at home and in their schools and communities.
- **Children who are prepared are more confident during emergencies and disasters.** Social science research and anecdotal evidence support the idea that children who have learned

about emergency preparedness experience less anxiety during an actual emergency or disaster.³²

Although the Bushfire and Natural Hazard CRC recognises the importance of CC-DRR, other opportunities to promote children's engagement and participation should be explored. Governments, emergency service organisations and emergency management planners should develop coordinated and integrated strategies to conduct consistent and effective consultations with children and young people to obtain their input into the emergency management plans that affect their lives. It is essential that these consultations utilise validated child participatory methods and are undertaken by trained professionals. This will require ongoing commitment resourcing and funding.

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Federal government should establish youth councils, such as that developed by FEMA in the United States, for the purpose of engaging children and young people in emergency management planning, preparedness and disaster resilience building.

³² FEMA Youth Preparedness. Youth Council. Available from: <http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness>

5. Emergency management planning for the needs of children

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups when emergencies and disasters occur. Recent experience in Australia has highlighted this with large scale disasters having ongoing consequences for children and young people. An example of the ongoing impact of disasters is evident in the Kinglake Ranges in Victoria following the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires where more than four years after the fires “The Smouldering Stump Campaign” was developed in partnership with schools and community groups to fundraise to support the ongoing needs of children. The campaign launch brochure states ‘Children and young people continue to struggle with maintaining “normal routines” and parents are exhausted and overwhelmed with the issues that face their children.’³³ This experience is also supported in academic literature, which reports that children have physiological, psychological, developmental and educational vulnerabilities in emergencies and disasters.³⁴

In the United States, the National Commission on Children and Disasters was given the task of carrying out the first ever comprehensive review of disaster related laws regulations, programs and policies to assess their responsiveness to the needs of children and to make recommendations to close critical gaps.³⁵ The term “benign neglect” was coined by the National Commission on Children and Disasters and describes the neglect of children due to the fact that they are silent in emergency management planning, resulting in their unique needs not being met. This has also been referred to as invisibility of children in emergency management planning by responders to disasters like the 2011 Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the 2011 Lorca earthquake in Spain. This is the current situation in Australia, as the unique needs of children are not routinely and systematically considered in emergency management planning.

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (NSDR) was adopted by the Council of Australian Governments in 2011. The strategy recognises that leadership by government is essential to support disaster planning and preparedness. It also highlights the need for a collective responsibility between government, business, communities and individuals. The NSDR recognises that a national, coordinated and cooperative effort is needed to enhance Australia’s capacity to prepare for, withstand and recover from disasters. The strategy is the first step in a long term evolving process to build sustained behavioral change and enduring partnerships.³⁶ The NSDR does not explicitly mention children, however, the spirit of the strategy would indicate that long-term behavioral change must begin with children and focusing on developing disaster resilience in children is a natural extension of this. Given that the unique needs of children are largely overlooked in emergency management planning throughout Australia, the NSDR can play an important role in rectifying this gap in current policy and practice in Australia.³⁷

³³ *The Smouldering Stump Campaign Flyer*, in *Collaboration between community and schools*. 2013.

³⁴ Flynn, B.W. and M.E. Nelson, *Understanding the needs of children following large scale disasters and the role of government*. Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America; and Peek, L., *Children and Disasters: Understanding Vulnerability, Developing Capacities, and Promoting Resilience - An Introduction*. Children, Youth and Environments, 2008, 18(1): p. 1-29; and Madrid, P.A., et al., *Short-term Impact of a Major Disaster on Children's Mental Health: Building Resiliency in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina*. Pediatrics, 2006, 117(5): p. s448-s453.

³⁵ Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Commission on Children and Disasters*. 2010. Available <http://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/nccd/20110427002908/http://www.childrenanddisasters.acf.hhs.gov/index.html>

³⁶ Governments, C.o.A., *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, A. General's, Editor 2011, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra.

³⁷ Save the Children, *Don't leave me alone: Protecting children in Australian disasters and emergencies*. Government report card on emergency management planning (2013).

The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) represents a comprehensive national policy and financial framework for disaster relief and recovery. Through the long-standing NDRRA, the Federal government provides partial reimbursement to states and territories for eligible expenditure on certain disaster events.³⁸ The NDRRA only focuses on responding to the effects of disasters on communities. This is an inherent problem with the current approach which is reactive and applies post-emergencies and disasters in the response and recovery phase, rather than pro-actively focusing on mitigation and preparedness to ensure communities are better equipped and ready when disasters strike. An increased focus on resilience building activities to enable better community preparedness, and to facilitate improved responses in the face of emergencies, should be addressed within NDRRA. This may require the addition of a new determination or guideline that specifically considers funding for activities focused on disaster mitigation and enhancing community preparedness, with a particular emphasis on building resilience amongst children and young people. While the NDRRA indicates that it is a State responsibility to develop and implement disaster mitigation strategies, it is unclear how the NDRRA and the Federal Government support and facilitate these strategies.

NDRRA Guideline 4 details the community recovery fund which is available when a community is severely affected by a natural disaster event and needs to restore social networks, functioning and community facilities. Expenditure is to be aimed at community recovery, community development and community capacity building for the future.³⁹ An increased focus on capacity building for the future through developing resilience in children in the recovery phase should be specifically outlined in this guideline. Currently there is no specific mention of activities that are targeted at children and young people in the NDRRA. Making specific mention of activities aimed at children and young people will assist in ensuring that their needs and contribution to their communities are not overlooked. This in turn will allow children and young people to be active participants in community recovery activities and should focus on activities that will build children's resilience to future disasters.

The NDRRA outlines eligible events for assistance with 'Category A' measures describing assistance available to individuals, including personal counselling. Just like adults, children can suffer long term psychological impacts following disasters and they require specialised support; this should be explicitly included as an eligible measure. For example, funding the provision of Child Friendly Spaces (CFS's), which provide a safe space and supervised activities, would better support children's wellbeing and promote safety in the midst of an emergency. The CFS model is designed to identify possible risks for children and provide a much needed link to early recovery services. The model integrates play and psychosocial support and assists children to cope with the chaos of a disaster by focusing on developing resilience.⁴⁰

³⁸ Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. Available from:

<http://www.disasterassist.gov.au/NDRRADetermination/Pages/default.aspx>

³⁹ Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements Guideline 4. Available from:

<http://www.disasterassist.gov.au/NDRRADetermination/Documents/ndrra-guideline4-community-recovery-package.pdf>

⁴⁰ DAVIE, S., STUART, M., WILLIAMS, F. & ERWIN, E. 2014, Child Friendly Spaces: protecting and supporting children in emergency response and recovery, *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 29.

Case study 4: Child Friendly Spaces

Cyclone Giri that struck Myanmar in 2010 was the strongest storm to hit the country since Cyclone Nargis moved across Southern Myanmar in May 2008. Cyclone Giri brought heavy flooding rain and raised water levels, causing large scale damage. Save the Children Myanmar's early assessments highlighted that many children were in an acute state of distress and that the overwhelming majority of homes, schools and other facilities had been destroyed or damaged. Save the Children Myanmar's child protection programme helped establish 20 child friendly spaces in Myebon and Pauktaw, two of the most affected areas. Approximately 3,000 children regularly attended the 20 child friendly spaces that were established. Together with WASH, health, livelihoods, nutrition and education activities, the psychosocial support and child protection programme run through the child friendly spaces in the aftermath of cyclone Giri had a significant impact on improving the lives of children in the area.

Without specific mention of children in NDRRA guidelines the valuable contribution that they can make to building community resilience to future disasters can be too easily overlooked in the hectic post-emergency space. We also need to consider how NDRRA can actively build community resilience and preparedness so that children, young people and adults are all better prepared and ready to respond when disasters strike.

RECOMENDATIONS:

- The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience should be reviewed to explicitly address the unique needs of children, recognising their capacity to contribute to building broader community resilience.
- The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements should be revised so that States are supported to develop and implement disaster mitigation strategies that enhance community resilience and preparedness, with a particular focus on building capacity of children which, in turn, influences families and the wider community.
- The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements Guideline 4 should be revised to include activities and programs that specifically address the needs of children and young people; for example, Child Friendly Spaces in evacuation centres.