Best practice guide for migrant and refugee inclusive disaster preparedness, response, and recovery

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MULTICULTURAL
CENTRE FOR
WOMEN'S HEALTH

About MCWH

Established in 1978, MCWH is a Victorian-based women's health service that works nationally and across the state to promote the health and wellbeing of migrant and refugee women through advocacy, social action, multilingual education, research, and capacity building.

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About the Migrant & Refugee Inclusive Disaster Recovery & Response Project

The aim of The Migrant and Refugee Inclusive Disaster Recovery and Response (MIDiRR) project is to build the capacity of Victorian Women's Health Services to respond effectively to the specific health and wellbeing needs of migrant and refugee women who have been impacted by floods.

As part of the MIDiRR project, MCWH has developed this best practice guide to support service providers, emergency response agencies, healthcare providers, non-government and community organisations who are working with migrant and refugee communities as part of their disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

Introduction

Natural disasters (hereafter referred to as disasters) such as floods, bushfires, droughts, and cyclones are occurring with increasing frequency and intensity across the country. When a disaster hits, everyone in a community is affected. However, the experience of disaster is not uniform.

It is well-documented in Australian literature that the impacts of disasters are gendered where 'more men die in direct response, but women are more likely to die while sheltering in a home or fleeing' (Alston, 2017). Evidence has indicated that gendered social norms and narratives shape people's susceptibility to the impacts of disaster in different ways (Whittaker et al., 2015). Especially when it comes to recovery, women significantly contribute to unpaid community support work. While caring for children and family, they often forgo or relinquish employment opportunities that are crucial for their longer-term financial security. This pattern occurred in the aftermath of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires (Alston, 2017) and the 2011 floods in Queensland and Victoria (Shaw et al., 2012).

Further, Australian research has shown that during and after disasters, women experience higher rates of domestic violence and intimate partner violence (Chowdhury et al., 2021; Gleeson, 2020; Parkinson et al., 2021; Sohrabizadeh & Parkinson, 2021). Women who live with a violent partner before a disaster are likely to experience social or geographic isolation, restricted access to a car or money, and difficulties in evacuating due to their partner's refusal during a disaster. Parkinson conducted interviews with 30 women across Victoria to find that incidences of domestic violence increased in the aftermath of the bushfires. In that same study, Parkinson found that women's voices about domestic violence were effectively silenced as a result of the lack of statistics, recovery and reconstruction operations, and adequate responses to women by legal, community and health professionals (Parkinson, 2019).

An intersectional approach to disaster response and recovery

The impacts of disaster are amplified for women, non-binary and gender diverse individuals who also face multiple systems of oppression that are tied to various aspects of their identity, including Aboriginality, age, disability, sexuality and gender diversity, ethnicity, and/or being of migrant and refugee background.[*]

To challenge the gender-blind and one-size-fits-all approach to emergency management which has typically characterised Australian disaster responses, an intersectional approach to disaster response and recovery is needed.

Intersectionality reminds us that disasters are social experiences too, where enduring systems of oppression, such as colonialism, class oppression, racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and ageism coalesce to disproportionately impact the most marginalised members of society. It has been well established in literature and practice that marginalised individuals are less likely to be prepared for a disaster, are more susceptible during it, have higher mortality rates, and poorer outcomes in the recovery period (Mallon et al., 2013).

For example, the Disaster Recovery Allowance that is delivered through Centrelink can leave women on temporary visas or those who have recently arrived without any financial help in the wake of disasters. This is a significant gap in the context of the government's increased focus on regional migration leading to increased numbers of migrants settling in regional areas. The National Women's Alliance noted that 'migrants in regional areas have regional residency requirements which means that they cannot move out of or away from high-risk zones and areas in preparation for disasters, or to re-establish themselves post-disaster' (2020, p.13). These challenges are compounded by factors such as the lack of social networks and community support for migrants in regional areas, and ineligibility for government financial support.

In short, approaching disaster response and recovery from an intersectional perspective means challenging the static tendency to categorise groups in terms of vulnerability to hazards. As such, it is crucial that we do not view migrant and refugee communities as homogenous entities. Care should be taken to consider intersecting forms of inequalities and how their impacts are experienced differently across social positions such as gender, sexuality, age, education, income, religion, ethnicity, geographic location, visa status, and politics.

In practice, this looks like:

- Prioritising and centring marginalised peoples' experiences, voices, and leadership wherever possible to understand the dynamics that shape disaster vulnerability and resilience.
- Acknowledging that social issues and inequalities are shaped by many factors interacting together and that there is no fixed hierarchy of disadvantage.
- Advancing strategies and solutions that accommodate and represent the diversity of migrant and refugee identities and experiences.
- Recognising that people can experience oppression and privilege simultaneously, depending on the context and situation.
- Committing to transforming systems of power and privilege that shape individual outcomes, collective action, and work towards social equity.
- Reflecting on and addressing our own relationships to power and privilege as decision-makers.

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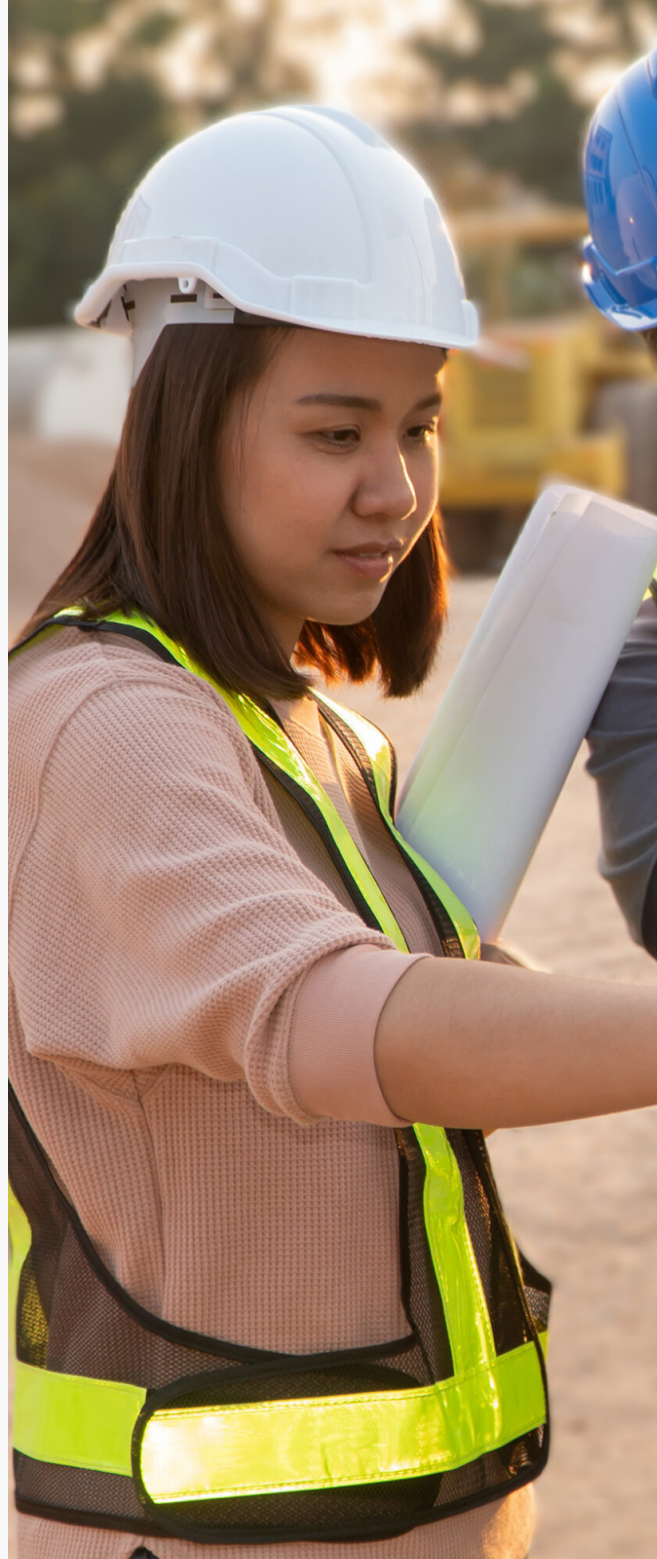
At the end of this guide, we present a list of other resources written by colleagues who are also advocating for more inclusive disaster responses in Australia.

Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery amongst migrant and refugee populations: An overview of evidence

The World Health Organisation estimates that climate change will cause 'approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050, with marginalised groups such as migrants, refugees and other displaced populations being most affected' (2023, p.16). It is important to acknowledge that many migrants and refugees come from countries where there has been a high risk of natural disasters, especially within the Asia-Pacific. Research has found that between 2008 and 2018, the Asia-Pacific alone saw more than '80% of all new disaster displacement' (Ponserre and Ginetti 2019, p.7). Additionally, Indonesia, India and the Philippines were identified as three countries at highest risk of 'falling victim to a humanitarian disaster caused by extreme natural events and the impacts of climate change' (Reliefweb 2023, para. 3). The escalation in both the frequency and intensity of disasters means there will be increased internal and cross-border displacement across the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia. Now more than ever, there is a need to work towards climate resilience in migrant and refugee populations by ensuring that disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts are inclusive.

Migrant and refugee populations are often identified as being at higher risk to the impacts of emergencies than the mainstream population (International Organisation for Migration, 2017; Hanson-Easey et al., 2018; Howard et al., 2014). Exacerbating factors include the lack of access to resources (including information, knowledge, and technology), limited access to political power, undeveloped social capital (including social networks and connections), and trauma experienced pre- and post-migration (Cutter et al., 2003).

The Joint Report prepared by the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV), Neighbourhood Collective Australia, and Regional Victorians of Colour on the experiences of multicultural communities during the

2022 Victorian floods found that newly arrived communities were not prepared for the floods and faced significant and unique hardships when the disaster broke out (2023). For example, new arrivals reported 'being evacuated from caravan accommodation to an unused factory... rather than to an evacuation centre, so that their employer wouldn't have reduced staffing during the floods' (ECCV et al. 2023, pp.10-11). Additionally, those on temporary protection and temporary working visas were 'asked to ignore road closures and to continue working on farms and orchards, leading at times, to being stranded in isolated areas when conditions changed suddenly' (ECCV et al. 2023, pp. 10-11). These insights indicate that those who were newly arrived and those on temporary visas not only faced greater exposure to the floods, but experienced inadequate support from their employers pre-, during and post-disaster.

The current evidence addresses the impacts of disasters on migrants and women as separate groups, which often masks the experiences of migrant and refugee women (Trentin et al., 2023). Additionally, there is a lack of evidence on the experiences of multicultural non-binary, gender diverse and LGBTIQA+ communities in disaster settings. However, we know that LGBTIQA+ communities also experience many barriers to access support before, during and after disasters, including but not limited to, experiences of discrimination and violence, lack of recognition of family and couple status, and lack of access of gender affirming medication (Parkinson et al., 2018).

Considering these limitations, this guide combines the available research evidence with MCWH's 45 years of experience of working with migrant and refugee women, to provide guidelines and recommendations for more inclusive disaster preparedness, response, and recovery management.

About this guide

The purpose of this resource is to outline a set of guiding principles to inform disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts for migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people. Given the scarcity of data and literature on how disasters impact migrant and refugee communities in Australia, there is a need to provide clear guidance on what inclusive emergency management could look like.

'Best practice' in this guide refers to approaches and practices that are aligned with the principles of human rights and community development. This guide builds upon the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which calls for a more 'people-centred preventive approach to disaster risk' and stresses the need for emergency management practices to be 'inclusive and accessible in order to be efficient and effective' (2015, p.10).

Another relevant document is Australia's National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework. While it does not focus on migrant and refugee communities, it establishes 'inclusive engagement' as one of its guiding principles.

The guidelines in this resource are based on a literature review of migrant and refugee inclusive disaster risk reduction in Australia and overseas, and current recommendations for successful approaches that are inclusive of migrant and refugee women, non-binary and gender diverse people.

Who can use this guide

This guide intends to support services, organisations and groups who work with and/or support migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people through natural disasters in Australia. This includes women's health services, emergency response agencies, healthcare providers, non-government and community organisations, and disaster preparedness and recovery support groups.

Key Terms and Definitions

At MCWH, we are committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all people who are impacted by the intersections of racial discrimination, gender inequality and the migration system in Australia, including migrant and refugee non-binary and gender diverse people. However, we acknowledge the authors cited in this report often position and/or assume that the people they term 'women' are cisgendered. We recognise this data is not inclusive of non-binary and gender diverse migrant and refugee people living in Australia and does not always accurately reflect their experiences.

Intersectionality: 'Intersectionality' is a way of seeing or analysing the dynamics of power and social inequality in our society. It can be described in different ways: as a theory, an approach, a lens, a framework and so on. 'Intersectionality' places the spotlight on how systems, structures and processes can simultaneously oppress and privilege different people depending on aspects of their identity, such as class, race or gender. For example, those of us who are racialised and also women cannot separate out the effects of both of those things – they are always in relationship with one another. To learn more about intersectionality, please see MCWH's Intersectionality Matters (2017) guide.

Natural disaster: The Victorian Department of Health includes fires, floods, heatwaves, earthquakes, storms, and tsunamis under the category of natural disasters. It is important to recognise that talking about disasters as 'natural' often does not capture the reality of these climatic and weather events and the role colonisation has played (e.g., through stolen land, disruption to First Nations land management practices, and the introduction of colonial agricultural practices) in exacerbating the impacts they have on communities today. For this reason, we use the term 'disaster' instead throughout the guide.

Migrants and refugees: At MCWH, we use the term 'migrant and refugee' to refer to people and their children who have migrated to Australia from overseas. It includes people who are part of both newly emerging and longer established communities, and who arrive in Australia on either temporary or permanent visas.

Other terms used in this guide

Emergency management: The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience defines emergency management as 'a range of measures to manage risks to communities and the environment; the organisation and management of resources for dealing with all aspects of emergencies.' It involves the coordination of plans, structures and arrangements from government, voluntary and private agencies to deal with the whole spectrum of emergency needs from prevention all the way through to recovery.

Resilience: Within emergency studies, 'resilience' refers to the capacity of individuals and communities to cope with disrupting events. It implies the capacity to return to normalcy after disruptions, or in the best of cases, more connected communities, and increased levels of preparedness. Resilience operates at different levels and is a shared responsibility between community members, non-government organisations, and governments.

Vulnerability: This guide defines 'vulnerability' as the product of social inequalities. Migrant and refugee people are not born vulnerable, but rather are made so by systemic inequalities such as sexism, racism, financial insecurity, precarious employment, migration-related stressors, health inequalities, and structural and interpersonal violence. These inequalities influence and shape migrant and refugee people's experiences of harm and their ability to prepare, respond and recover through disasters.

Best Practice Guidelines for Migrant Inclusive Disaster Response and Recovery

We need a new approach to disasters – one that values care as a community and public good (Rooney et al., 2023). A care lens acknowledges that disasters require strong communities that are properly supported on a much longer timescale. This approach does not dismiss the importance of disaster responses in the moment but speaks to long-term investment in the complex and nonlinear relationships of community cohesion (Rooney et al., 2023). Encouragingly, the National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework notes that in emergencies, 'community connections are vital to recovery, adaptation and resilience in the future' (National Emergency Management Agency 2023, p.1).

Prior to a disaster, strong social connections can help to promote disaster preparedness behaviours. During the response phase, social capital has been linked to more effective emergency communication, higher levels of trust between citizens and response agencies, and increased community solidarity (Chandonnet, 2021). Beyond the preparedness and response phases, communities with pre-existing high levels of connection, solidarity, and trust are able to recover faster (Australian Red Cross, 2012). Australian literature focusing on the recovery of residents affected by the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires and the 2019-20 bushfires have identified social supports and connections to be strong protective factors of mental health outcomes (Gibbs et al. 2021; Harms et al. 2021; Cruwys et al. 2023).

As such, while investing in the physical and technical infrastructure of disaster mitigation and response is important, strengthening community connection and cohesion is equally crucial. Especially when it comes to migrant and refugee communities, intra-group relationships and social connections are powerful sources of practical and emotional support, empowering newcomers to overcome the challenges of migration and settlement in Australia and helping members better prepare

for disruptive events (Chandonnet, 2021). Services, organisations, and groups who work with and/or support migrants and refugees through natural disasters are well-advised to invest time into these pre-established 'infrastructures of connection' (Rooney et al. 2023, p.31) and strengthen trust, mutual support, and reciprocity as a way of building disaster resilience.

To guide action, we propose the following to ensure disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts are inclusive of migrants and refugees:

1. Community engagement and dialogue

2. Community leadership

3. Empowering migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people

4. Targeted awareness raising

5. Tailor emergency risk communications

6. Ensuring equity in response efforts

7. Facilitate activities that enable a gradual return to regularity and routine

8. Enhance gender equality and transform unequal power relations

9. Monitoring, evaluation, and research

These guidelines are ordered according to the phases of the emergency management cycle: preparedness, response, and recovery. It is important to note that these phases do overlap and are not discrete categories. Managing emergencies and strengthening connections with migrant and refugee communities should ideally be happening all the time, not just during the 'disaster season' (for example, bushfires, cyclones, droughts, etc.).

Each guideline is accompanied by a list of recommended practices – they are by no means exhaustive. The aim of these recommended practices is to provide actions that can be taken to better support migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people in the event of a disaster.

Preparedness

Disaster preparedness refers to activities undertaken in advance of an emergency to decrease the impact, extent, and severity of the disaster and to ensure a more effective response. Activities include creating and testing plans, training, educating, and sharing information with communities should an emergency eventuate.

In this section, we suggest four guidelines that can be undertaken with migrant and refugee women, non-binary and gender diverse people to ensure disaster preparedness is more inclusive.

Guideline 1: Community Engagement and Dialogue

Meaningful community engagement and dialogue is key to inclusive emergency management for migrant and refugee communities. Community engagement refers to the practice of achieving trustworthy interactive communication and strong relationships between community members, emergency services, and government. The aim of community engagement is to enable the co-design and shared ownership of disaster resilience strategies and practices. Most community engagement models in Australia on emergency management implicitly restrict learning to a one-way flow of information with migrant and refugee communities. This involves receiving information about risks and participating in workshops on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery (Lakhina, 2019). While these efforts are important, this top-down approach fails to recognise that migrant and refugee communities are often well-informed about their needs and hold invaluable local knowledge that can assist emergency agencies and decisionmakers to identify priority support needs.

Disaster preparedness initiatives, therefore, need to focus on engaging with migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people as peers and as leaders.
Migrant and refugee communities are not a homogenous group. Their knowledge and experiences of disaster preparedness are impacted by the

language(s) they speak, country of origin, years lived in Australia, length of settlement, education, reasons for migration, and socio-economic background. Engaging with migrant and refugee communities requires flexible and tailored approaches to deliver meaningful activities. Equally, without addressing communities in their preferred language, there is a greater risk that messages will be misdirected, miscommunicated, and misunderstood. As such, community engagement and dialogue needs to be conducted in-language to be effective.

Recommended Practices

- Take the time to understand the community context, including its history, demographic composition, dynamics, and values. Consider how these factors intersect to determine migrant and refugee people's capacity to prepare, respond and recover through disasters.
  - If unsure, engage with migrant and refugee-led organisations like MCWH. Alternatively, seek guidance and advice from a Women's Health Service in your region on how community engagement activities can be inclusive and gender responsive.
- Undertake training on intersectionality and its application, and how to meaningfully engage with migrant and refugee communities. For example, relevant modules offered by MCWH include 'Intersectionality 101', 'Understanding Race, Culture and Gender', and 'Engaging Migrant and Refugee Communities'.
- Do not assume that all members of a community will have similar beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and knowledge about how to prepare for and safely respond to a disaster.
- Bring your organisation to the community; meet with community groups and representatives on their terms and in familiar and culturally appropriate environments.
- Work with existing community groups and networks to gauge existing community perceptions and experiences of disasters.
- Engage all migrant and refugee people in the community, including women, people of diverse sexual and gender identities, youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities, in identifying gaps in the support system.
- Create safe and supportive environments to facilitate in-language community dialogue. Allow time and space to enable discussion of what enhances and/or limits collective and individual health and wellbeing.
- Employ facilitators who share a common cultural background, language, age, and gender with participants.
- Use appropriate in-language resources and aids to facilitate discussion (such as videos and images).
- Use simple and clear language that is easy to recognise and understand in both written and spoken communications.

Guideline 2: Community Leadership

Community leaders and members are more likely to get involved when they genuinely believe they can inform the outcome and their knowledge and experiences are respected, valued, and acted upon. Successful emergency management initiatives that are inclusive of migrants and refugees are therefore always community-led. In practice, this means involving the community throughout all aspects of the development and implementation of disaster preparedness, response and recovery programs and initiatives. This approach allows community members to take leadership of the issue and develop effective strategies that work within their communities – factors that are vital for disaster recovery and resilience.

As part of this work, invite involvement from community-endorsed leaders and champions. Community leaders possess a deep understanding of their local contexts and continuously engage with their communities to empower and educate members. When it comes to preparing for disasters, community leaders are a 'powerful point of entry' (Chandonnet 2021, p. 111), as they are in positions of trust and have influence within their communities. Emergency information originating from such trusted figures will generally be perceived as reliable and important and is therefore more likely to lead to the adoption of preparedness actions.

Care should be taken to ensure that leaders are perceived as trustworthy by the community. Take the time to actively research the community you are engaging with and the key actors who are necessary for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

Another effective approach is to work with community members who can champion the promotion of emergency information. This generally entails emergency management agencies recruiting and training motivated community members to share information in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. This approach increases the intake of emergency information, while providing opportunities for community involvement in disaster risk reduction.
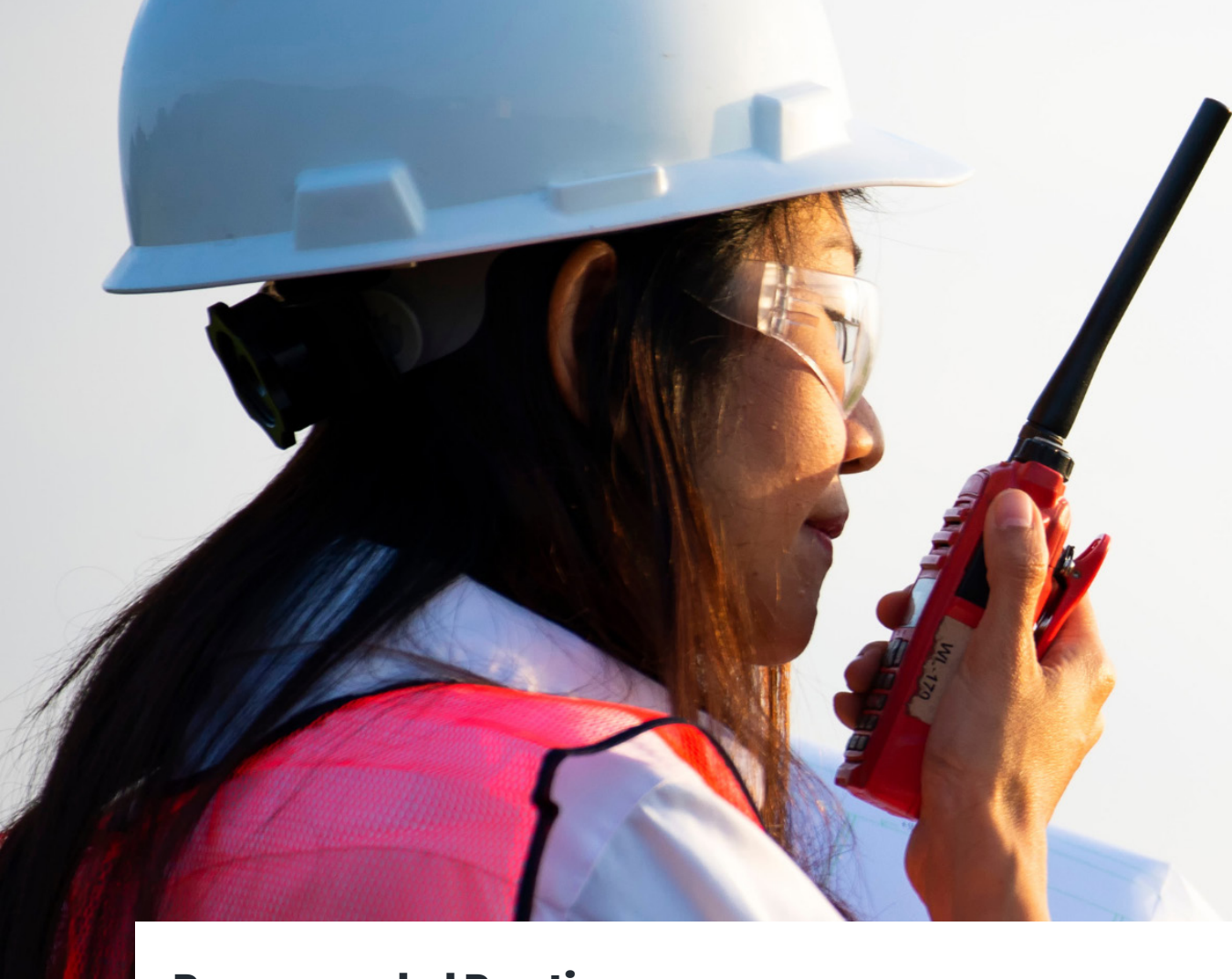
Recommended Practices

- Consult with a diverse range of community members, leaders and groups representing migrant women, people of diverse sexual and gender identities, people with disabilities, youth, the elderly and different religious groups in both formal and informal capacities. Seek their advice and feedback at all stages of the project, including planning and implementation. Ensure that people are adequately compensated for consultation.

- Be honest and clear about your aims and objectives with community members.

- Employ educators, staff and spokespeople from the communities being engaged. Make sure community leaders are perceived as trustworthy, and strengthen, equip, and enhance their skills to respond to emergencies.

- Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of those involved in response and recovery activities.
  - Build community accountability into the planning, development, and decision-making of activities.
  - Dedicate roles in steering and reference groups for community members to oversee program direction.

- Foster positive conditions for community members to participate in and contribute to the delivery of activities. For example, offer provisions for travel support, childcare and professional payment or reimbursement for time. Consider working with bilingual workers or professional interpreters if needed. Be prepared to work at the pace set by community members and groups.

Guideline 3: Empowering migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people

Disasters have gendered impacts. An intersectional lens to emergency management reminds us that migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people are disproportionately impacted by disasters. For many, their experiences of gender inequality are impacted by the inequity of access to support services, social acceptance, and economic security, and therefore face greater exposure to disasters.

Yet despite this, the voices and capacities of migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people remain largely excluded and unleveraged in disaster risk reduction processes. Their exclusion from disaster risk reduction and decision-making processes is linked to the disproportionate impact of disasters on women and other marginalised groups (Bhargava and Selby, 2022).

As such, the leadership and participation of migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people is necessary to ensure emergency management is appropriate, meaningful, and gender responsive at all stages. Programs should prioritise the empowerment of marginalised groups in disaster risk reduction and invest in building their capacity and leadership skills to increase their decision-making power.

Recommended Practices

- Ensure women from all diverse backgrounds and abilities meaningfully participate in risk assessment, preparedness actions, and action plans for disaster risk management and resilience plans.
- Recognise, support, and invest in migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people's diverse knowledge, skills, and capacities around disaster preparedness, response and recovery.
  - Migrant and refugee people who have experienced a disaster in the past may hold invaluable knowledge on how to prepare, respond to and recover from disasters. It is important to recognise and value that knowledge, experience and expertise.
- Develop and implement advocacy and leadership programs for migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people.
- Promote gender equality and women, non-binary, and gender diverse people's leadership and decision-making in disaster preparedness, response and recovery initiatives.

Guideline 4: Targeted awareness raising

Successful emergency response and recovery is contingent on good community awareness of local risks and hazards and disaster preparedness. Migrant and refugee communities' levels of awareness about local hazards, risks, existing safety measures and secure locations may vary depending on their familiarity with and length of stay in the local area or region, previous experience of disasters, availability of accessible and accurate in-language information (e.g., local hazard profiles), and training on personal safety and home preparedness.

Targeted outreach and awareness raising activities delivered in-language and through formal and informal community networks can further strengthen the ability of communities to withstand the impacts of a disaster.

Older migrants, women, children, and people with disabilities and pre-existing physical and mental health conditions may face compounding barriers to accessing information critical to ensuring health and wellbeing before, during and after a disaster. It is vital that available information considers a wide range of accessibility needs and is disseminated widely through preferred channels and platforms for communication used by different migrant and refugee community groups.

Recommended Practices

- Develop multilingual information and practical guides that provide tips on disaster preparedness. Ensure ease of access, availability, and distribution of these resources.
- Establish preferred modes of communication with migrant and refugee people.
- Consider the needs of socially and physically isolated households, especially elderly people with limited transport and parents without childcare support, who may require support in accessing resources. For example, consider whether it is possible to deliver in-home preparedness training and support that could be delivered in-language by a trained community member, such as a bilingual health educator.
- If delivering workshops and training in-language, consider employing bilingual educators from the community. Interpretation, style, and pace of presentation are important considerations for information sessions to be useful and meaningful to migrant and refugee communities (Lakhina, 2019).

Respond

In the emergency management cycle, the respond phase refers to the provision of assistance and interventions during or immediately after an emergency. It focuses on saving lives and protecting community assets, such as buildings, roads, animals, crops, and infrastructure.

Guideline 5: Tailor emergency risk communications

Access to emergency risk information and time-sensitive warnings helps save lives, protects property and assets, and minimises injuries and trauma from a disaster. However, financial and language barriers, varying levels of access to social and mass media, and inequalities in access and use of information and communications technology can hinder access to time-critical warnings and evacuation orders in migrant and refugee communities.

During the 2022 floods, ECCV found that international students and those with high levels of English reported using platforms, such as the VicEmergency app, emergency services websites, local radio, local newspapers, websites, and suburb/town Facebook groups to receive emergency information. In comparison, 'newly arrived communities did not access any of these relying heavily on community leaders for information' (2022, p.6).

In the respond phase, it is essential to have reliable and timely multilingual information that is accessible to migrant and refugee communities and considers a variety of accessibility needs. In the absence of accurate in-language information, people from migrant and refugee communities may prefer to receive emergency information from sources such as family, friends, community leaders and broader social networks. The time spent seeking confirmation of information from social networks, however, contributes to the disproportionate impact of disasters on migrant and refugee communities. Developing tailored disaster risk communication strategies and messaging can help to alleviate this impact.

Recommended Practices

- Actively involve migrant and refugee communities and representatives in the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate disaster risk information and communication strategies.
- Develop and translate 'evergreen' resources in easy-to-understand languages and/or with visuals to support people with low levels of literacy in English and other languages.
- Identify social media platforms, apps, and radio and television channels most used by different community groups and disseminate information accordingly.
- Identify and establish communications channels through existing community networks and groups to disseminate time-critical information and warnings during an emergency.
- Disseminate disaster risk communications through a variety of channels to expand reach. Remember, as a disaster unfolds, written translations will become out-of-date quickly and might not be effective or accurate.
- Consistently review and update disaster risk information.

Guideline 6: Ensuring equity in response efforts

Disasters devastate along the lines of existing inequalities. In order to have equitable emergency management systems, emergency response and relief practices must benefit everyone while also accounting for the specific needs of populations more susceptible to the adverse impacts of disaster.

The idea of 'equal treatment' in emergency responses is not enough, especially when meeting the immediate and short-term needs of migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people. Rather, 'there are times when acknowledging someone's difference, be it age, ethnicity, faith, gender or sexuality, is important to the type and quality of service they need' in the wake of disaster (Parkinson et al. 2022, p.93).

Recommended Practices

- Increase participation of people of migrant and refugee backgrounds in all aspects of emergency management.
  - Value and affirm difference within emergency organisations by being more inclusive of people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Teams that include people with lived experience are more effective in emergency responses.
  - Review and adapt recruitment, induction, and retention processes to increase workforce diversity. Explicit measures to increase and monitor cultural safety, including for volunteers must also be developed.
- Increase awareness amongst personnel of the needs and experiences of migrant and refugee people in emergencies.
  - Increase recognition that equal treatment often fails to meet the diversity of community, client and staff needs.
  - Embed additional cultural and gender considerations in emergency relief centres.
  - Consider the provision of interpreter services in evacuation centres and ensure these centres are able to provide culturally appropriate support, including access to culturally appropriate food.
- Provide facilities such as prayer rooms, parents' rooms, segregated sleeping arrangements, animal housing, etc. This list is not exhaustive but should be used to prompt discussions with members from migrant and refugee communities on how their needs can be met.
  - Consider facilities such as bathrooms, toilets and showers beyond 'male' and 'female' and provide an option for transgender and intersex people.
  - Provide options for recording gender on official forms and in verbal interviews.
- Provide migrant and refugee inclusive relief services, referral networks and other services for people affected by emergencies.
- In the aftermath of a disaster, seek feedback from community organisations and leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency response, focusing on possible improvements for future events.
  - Engage with gender-specific agencies, such as Women's Health Services, on how emergency management can be more inclusive and gender-sensitive in the future.

Recover

The recovery phase of the emergency management cycle refers to the coordinated process of supporting emergency-affected communities in the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and the restoration of emotional, social, economic, and physical wellbeing. In the wake of a disaster, people need their immediate survival and short-term needs met before they can begin to process the event. These immediate and short-term needs include (but are not limited to):

- sourcing culturally appropriate food, water, clothing and medical supplies;
- ensuring infant and children's needs are accounted for, such as nappies and formula;
- securing adequate and safe temporary to long-term accommodation;
- reconnecting with family, friends, neighbours, and community networks;
- finding employment or alternative sources of income;
- obtaining and paying for medical treatment and psychosocial support;
- accessing financial supports to rebuild, repair, replace damaged property and possessions; and
- seeking support in caring for sick, injured, or traumatised family and loved ones and childcare.
- Consistently review and update disaster risk information

During the recovery and reconstruction phase, keep in mind that the impacts of disasters have gendered dimensions. Women, non-binary, and gender diverse people face additional barriers and may need support for sexual and reproductive health and if at risk of or experiencing gender-based violence. The prioritisation of gender-specific needs during the recovery phase should be identified by using a participatory approach and engaging with affected populations. In addition, these engagements must be conducted in partnership with relevant women, non-binary, and gender diverse people-led organisations.

Guideline 7: Facilitate activities that enable a gradual return to regularity and routine

Disasters disrupt existing social bonds and attachments within a community. A key aspect of overcoming what may feel like insurmountable challenges in the face of disaster for affected communities and individuals is knowing they have the support of family, friends and the broader community and its institutions. Organising and facilitating community gatherings can promote a sense of solidarity and social cohesion. Communal activities can provide the opportunity for people to process the events that have transpired and move forward into a new normal or changed reality.

Recommended Practices

- If appropriate, organise or facilitate community social gatherings to memorialise events or celebrate significant achievements and milestones in the recovery process.
- Facilitate and moderate ways for people to connect, cope, and share their experiences, and heal. Consider different channels to engage with people who are unable to meet in person (e.g., parents with young children, people with disability, the elderly, people undertaking night or shift work).
- Engage specialist agencies to develop, or support, a wide range of gender-specific programs or groups in the emergency relief and recovery period, e.g. women's support groups, men's sheds, specific LGBTIQA+ programs.
- Consider the mental health needs of anyone who has experienced disaster in the past and the possibility of re-traumatisation during emergency events.
  - Migrant and refugee women who have experienced climate-induced displacement may continue to have links with friends, families, and communities in countries of origin that are also impacted by disaster. Disaster recovery efforts should be mindful of this and provide additional support where possible.
- Acknowledge the various forms of support that community members already provide to each other and find ways to support such activities. For example, provide the space, catering, supplies or funding needed to continue such activities.
- Make a concerted effort to reach migrants and refugees who are socially isolated or may not have access to personal and communal supports (e.g., LGBTQIA+, newly arrived or elderly people).
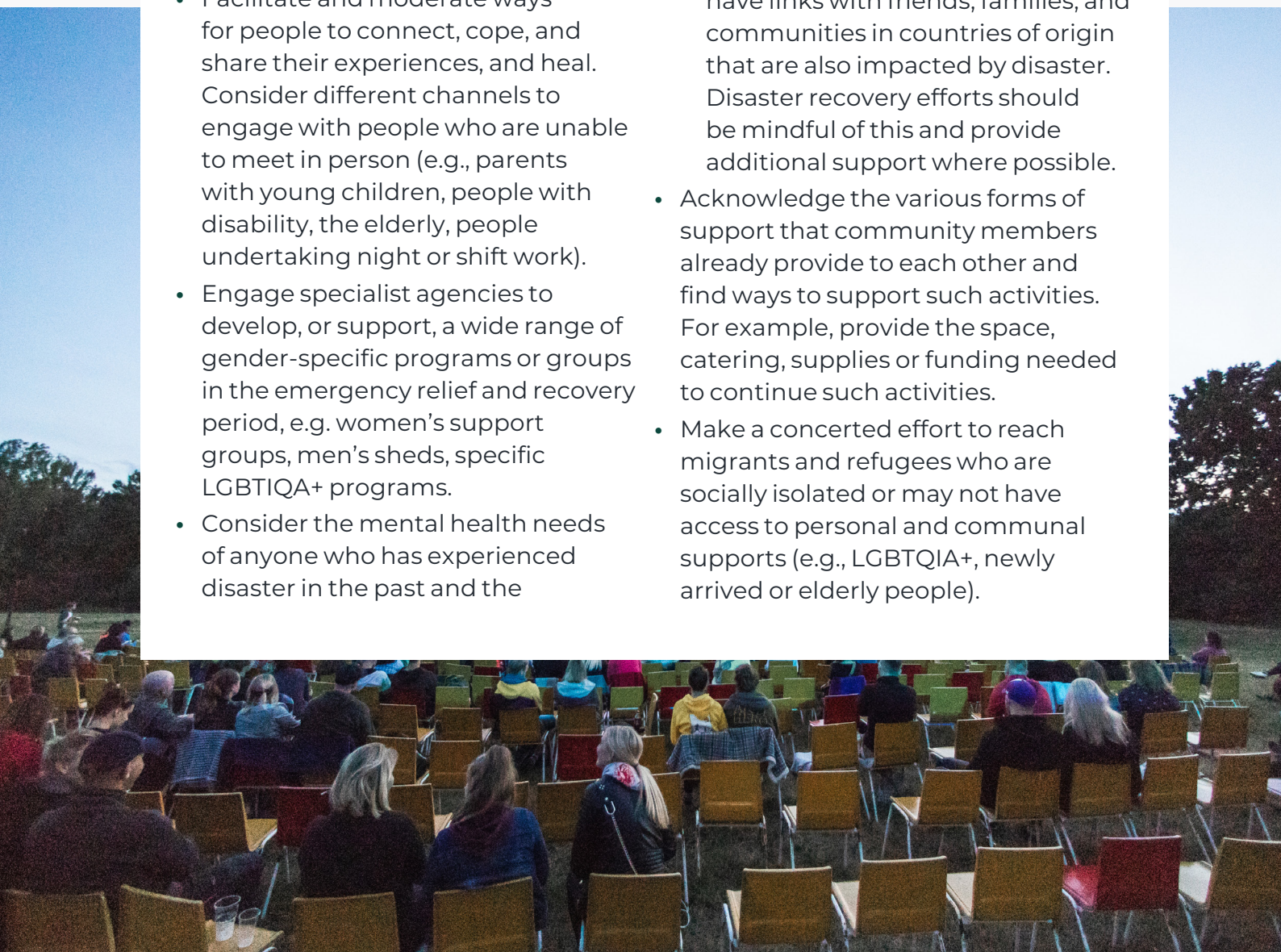
Guideline 8: Enhance gender equality and transform unequal power relations

Following a disaster, the recovery phase presents another opportunity to transform unequal power relations. The principle of 'building back better' should not only focus on rebuilding and restoring systems and livelihoods, but also on rebuilding in a way that is inclusive of women, girls, boys, men, non-binary, and gender diverse people. Promoting the political, social, and economic participation and leadership of migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people in this phase ensures recovery efforts are appropriate, meaningful, and gender responsive. To ensure an inclusive recovery process, the active promotion of migrant and refugee women, non-binary, and gender diverse people's participation in planning and other decision-making is crucial.

Recommended Practices

- Advocate for the development of gender-responsive strategies and policies in Australian emergency management planning, research, and training.
- Advocate for disaggregated disaster data collection and reporting. The current lack of robust gender analysis informing disaster and climate risk management approaches means that strategies and policies can often unintentionally exacerbate gender inequalities.
- Support and resource women, non-binary, and gender diverse people to take the lead in gender equity issues in the community.
- Advocate for and support long-term gender-responsive budgeting in disaster risk reduction. Reliance on short-term external funding sources constrains resources and capacity to integrate gender equality and social inclusion systemically.

Guideline 9: Monitoring, evaluation, and research

Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of preparedness, response, and recovery activities with migrant and refugee communities can illuminate service gaps and areas for improvement in future disasters. It may even reveal factors of significance to specific communities that may be missed in top-down processes.

Emergency preparedness, response and recovery strategies and frameworks must be based on evidence and any results derived from robust research with migrant and refugee communities in order to be effective.

Recommended Practices

- Involve migrant and refugee community members and organisations in the evaluation of programs and projects. Try to obtain feedback from diverse groups of representatives and groups.
- Collaborate with appropriate researchers to develop an evidence base on migrant-and-refugee-inclusive disaster response and recovery.

- Advocate for community-led and participatory research that builds knowledge about best practice.
- Collect disaggregated data on the social, economic and health impacts of disasters on migrant and refugee communities, in particular women, non-binary, and gender diverse people.

Further resources to guide inclusive disaster responses in Australia

Co-learning disaster resilience toolkit: A person-centred approach to engaging with refugee narratives and practices of safety
This toolkit aims to strengthen the preparedness and resilience of refugees and humanitarian entrants to natural hazards in Australia. The toolkit was developed specifically for caseworkers in humanitarian settlement and multicultural services, and community outreach staff in local emergency services and city councils.

Gender & Disaster Australia
Gender and Disaster Australia (GADAus) is the leading national organisation offering evidence-based education, training and resources to address the gendered impacts of disaster. GADAus have a collection of resources on their website (including snapshots, checklists, translated postcards, guidelines) all aimed at building the capacity of communities to effectively respond to gender-based violence in disaster.

In 2018, GADAus were commissioned by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Victoria to examine the experiences and needs of LGBTIQA+ communities before, during and after emergencies.

Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness Toolkit
The Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness Toolkit was co-designed by Collaborating 4 Inclusion in partnership with people with disability. The toolkit enables people to self-assess their preparedness, capabilities and support needs, and develop a personal emergency plan. As part of this project, the research team filmed videos to support people in culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are either living with or supporting someone with a disability.

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