Memorandum

ARUP

To	Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Houses	**Date**	19 October 2017
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From	Luke Sarsons, Arup	**File reference**	
Subject	Community Sector Climate Resilience Program - Final Report		

1   Introduction

The Department of Health and Human Services commissioned Arup to deliver the Community Sector Climate Resilience Program (CSCRP). The CSCRP is a two year program (2015-2017) where Arup is supporting funded agencies and community service organisations (CSOs) to enhance their resilience to disaster events and climate change impacts. The Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Houses (Anglesea, Apollo Bay, Colac, Deans Marsh, Forrest, Gellibrand, Lorne) including Colac Otway and Surf Coast Shire Councils signed up to participate in the program and requested Arup support them in defining and clarifying the role of neighbourhood houses in disaster management, understanding climate change risks, and establishing approaches to business continuity.

The following memo provides an overview of the activities of the program, including the key outputs, actions and recommendations for steps forward to better enhance resilience to climate change.

Climate change has broad reaching implications for neighbourhood houses, with impacts felt across many of the program activities and the communities they support. Determining the role and function of houses in emergency situations is critical enable communities to understand what they will and will not do when disasters strike. Whilst understanding climate change and broader organisation continuity risks will enable houses to build their own capacity to withstand shock and stressors.

2   Program

Arup facilitated four regional workshops with program participants. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- Define resilience and vulnerability for our community

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- Articulate lessons learnt from extreme weather events already experienced
- Clarify the role and expectations of neighbourhood houses
- Establish consistent planning for disruptive events
- Understand integrated resilience planning and determining factors significant for an integrated approach to resilience planning
- Determine climate and business continuity risks
- Establish risk treatment and adaptation solutions
- Determine appropriate actions for Take2 pledges

In addition to the workshops Arup also undertook a case study interview with Katy Kennedy, Coordinator of Lorne Community House, to share the learnings from Lorne's experience of the Wye River and Separation Creek fires in 2015.

3   Outputs

A number of outputs were produced through the engagement activities which are outlined below and attached in the corresponding appendices.

- Hazards and vulnerability assessment (Appendix A)

  - An assessment was undertaken to identify the impact of various climate change hazards on vulnerable groups within communities of the Barwon region.

- Action lists: Before, During and After Disasters (Appendix B)

  - Neighbourhood houses each defined the specific actions and activities that they would and would not undertake before, during and after disaster events.

- Case Study – Lorne 2015 fires (Appendix C)

  - A case study was developed to share the lessons and learnings from Lorne Community House's experience of the Wye River and Separation Creek fires in 2015

- Presentation for Committees of Management (Appendix D)

  - To gain buy-in from Committees of Management or Auspicing bodies around the need to prepare for and consider emergency and disaster management as an important issue of governance concern. The presentation highlights the rationale for why it is important, details the unique capabilities and capacity of houses, and provides recommendations for moving forward.

- Initial risks assessment (Appendix E)

  - An initial risk assessment process was undertaken to identify impacts that have the potential to interrupt program activities and support to the community. The assessment also articulates options to help reduce these risks, but further work is needed to complete this assessment.

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4   Actions

As a result of the engagement process, there are a number of actions to be completed by different actors across the network. Actions have been broken down across three levels, outlined below.

- Individual Houses
  - Complete the Don't Panic Guide to develop an emergency management plan for your house.
  - Review emergency management plan annually.
  - Deliver presentation to Committee of Management or Auspicing body to encourage them to adopt:
    - the guides for action before, during and after disasters
    - establish a sub-committee for emergency management to support development and review of Don't Panic emergency management plan
    - establish a formal process for approving and the annual review of the Don't Panic emergency management plan
  - Print and profile the role of neighbourhood houses before, during and after disasters, to educate the community and manage expectations.
  - Complete the risk assessment process in Appendix E to ensure all risks have appropriate responses in place to reduce their likelihood of occurring or impact if they do.

- Surf Coast and Colac Otway groups of NH (NOCH)
  - Establish relationships and formal connections with the relevant local government's emergency management committee.
  - Connect with other formal emergency services to develop shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in disaster management.

- Network
  - Establish relationships and formal connections with local governments' emergency management committees (Surf Coast, Colac Otway, Geelong, Queenscliff)
  - Connect with other formal emergency services to develop shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in disaster management.
  - Share program resources on the network website, and encourage house to access and publish new resources as they arise.
  - Undertake a governance needs assessment to determine opportunities to enhance the governance arrangement for neighbourhood houses. Include in the assessment

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discussions with neighbourhood house coordinators, committees of management, auspicing bodies and DHHS to determine an optimum approach. Staff burn-out and turnover is a key driver of this work.

5   Recommendations

Professional volunteers

It has been recognised that some neighbourhood houses will find it difficult to set aside the time required to develop an emergency management plan based on the Don't Panic guide. It is therefore recommended that houses look to identify a short term volunteer expert to develop the emergency management plan for the house. Coordinators could look to engage an individual who has recently retired or works part time and has emergency management/disaster experience. They may look to target CFA, SES or local governments for recommendations or potential volunteers. Could also consider someone in final stages of studying emergency/disaster management/climate change at a university level.

Governance

Maintaining clear, accountable and well-structured governance arrangements will make a significant difference in the operation and programming of neighbourhood houses. Well trained and supported Committees of Management or Auspicing bodies will also facilitate better outcomes for houses and the communities they support. There are also strong connections between coordinator burn-out and the house's governance arrangements, which could be explored to address issues of continuity and staff turnover. It is recommended that a thorough review and needs assessment of the network houses' governance arrangement be undertaken to identify opportunities for improvement, skill development, and to define strategies to support coordinators in their roles.

Additional funding for disaster management

Numerous houses identified that during emergency or disaster situations they are often required to adjust programming activities and alter opening times to accommodate increase demand for services within their communities. Although DHHS does make funding available to other funded agencies during emergencies, there is no formal agreement in place with neighbourhood houses. It would be valuable for the network to consider opportunities for advocating DHHS to consider establishing an agreement to support houses under specific circumstances (i.e. when an emergency has been declared for an area). With the impacts of climate change, the need for flexibility with how houses respond to their communities is important.

Ideas from Forrest Neighbourhood House

The following ideas have been presented by Forrest Neighbourhood House.

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1. Using key message frameworks - this is a standard health promotion tool and with appropriate technical advice - a set of key messages on emergency preparedness (and the advice we give and don't give) could be developed for the network.

2. I do feel we only should get involved in emergency preparedness if we are committed to doing it long-term, and consistently, and one way this could occur is if there is a standard package of resources/schedule of activities/and promotional material that the Network provides all the regional/rural NHs to deliver, so that it is rolled out comprehensively and accurately every year - and it is not left to each NH to sometimes do or not do depending on the coordinator. Realistically it should be seasonal and not just bushfire related - so for example a quarterly program.

3. DHHS has an Emergency Management Response training program and formal system in place. As a DHHS funded service provider I wonder if there is any way we could access their training program for coordinators and define our role within their system. DHHS employees that have EMT are trained for specific roles some of which are about being on the front line while others are about working in the information centres. It might be worth thinking about ourselves in this context. I think if anything formal is going to happen - it should be within our contractual relationship with DHHS and this would be the context to do it. http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/workforce,-careers-and-training/workforce-training/emergency-management-training

4. For a NH to achieve the recovery phase stuff outlined in the workshop - perhaps some "surge capacity" could be in the network. So if a NH is in an emergency response phase - additional hours of coordination, maybe even support staff, and other supplies and contingency cash could be provided immediately (or at least quickly) from the network - so that the response is sustainable and reasonable.

5. PIE IN THE SKY IDEA: In the case of an emergency recovery relief stage, I think the network of Neighbourhood Houses could have the capability to scale up to hosting small relief and recovery centres. This does not mean the coordinator does this - but rather the centre is made available to DHHS (or other) as part of the established emergency response system - our centres are equipped to provide food assistance, could be distribution centres for relief items, could provide the physical and ICT facilities for referral services (counselling, financial assistance, etc), community meetings, support to emergency response staff and volunteers. If not our facilities, we can also mobilise volunteers to support such activities. Or support the support (for example feeding volunteers, being a place to charge your phone or have a shower or have some down-time).

6. PIE IN THE SKY IDEA: There are different staffing or partnership models that could support a more formal role for Neighbourhood Houses. For example, NH could explore contractual models with DHHS or offer to partner with actors like the Red Cross that in the event of an emergency our facilities could be used to operate services from - and the coordinator clearly fits into a designated support role. Alternatively, the NH network thinks this is important enough they could recruit an emergency response coordinator that, in the event of an emergency in Victoria, is co-opted to a NH for X period of time to coordinate any emergency response activities). If the NH is serious about it, they could look at

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purchasing some items (eg like a generator or some ICT equipment useful in emergencies) that are mobile and could be placed anywhere in the state to support emergency response.

7. GENERALLY In the aftermath of a disaster nothing is the same as it was. So perhaps we shouldn't think of this in the context of how to fit emergency response in to a routine program, because that routine program of bingo and yoga and business training will be irrelevant for a while. Our response (whatever it is) should be clearly articulated through our contract with DHHS. It should be about having coordinators or a COM member or a designated NH contact point with base-level training so that they can be useful to the formal emergency response system. And having some contingency capacity in the network to support a Neighbourhood House to scale-up (with additional staffing hours, equipment, etc) if they are going to be an emergency response player.