

Sharing knowledge to put disaster risk reduction in action

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Australian Disaster Resilience Conference presents Knowledge Week was hosted online in August, exploring the theme of 'Disaster Risk Reduction in Action: Pathways to Success'.

Since the release of the *National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework* in 2019, Australia – and the world – has been faced by overwhelmingly large and complex threats.

The devastating Black Summer took hold in the context of Australia's warmest and driest year on record, sparking a climate change debate that raged in tandem with the fires themselves. And, as the fire risk started to wane, COVID-19 risk began to grow and emerge as a very different emergency.

Conference keynote speaker Alice Hill, told delegates, 'This year will be one for the history books. As we see more events occurring at once it's proving that our old method of doing things where we assume that there will be one fire, one hurricane, one tropical cyclone, simply does not hold going forward. And that means we need to look ahead, plan ahead and be better prepared.'

Alice Hill spoke extensively about the impact of climate change on disasters, emergency management and resilience. She highlighted that living in an age of consecutive, concurrent and compounding disasters requires a rethink on how we do things at a very fundamental level.

'With climate change, everything is historic. The worst storm that we just had maybe not the worst storm going forward. In all likelihood, it won't be,' she said, speaking to the need to plan for and incorporate record breaking risks in strategic and operational planning, system redundancy and mutual aid arrangements.

The four themed days of the conference looked at: collaborating for impact, local leadership, community creating change and business fostering resilience. Speakers from government, academia, business, the not-for-profit, community and education sectors shared leading examples and research.

Key issues addressed were:

- new partnerships, frameworks and approaches for disaster risk reduction and resilience in both high-level policy and strategy environments and the community-facing arena
- inclusive approaches to risk reduction and preparedness that respect, draw on and support communities
- lived experience informing community action, spontaneous volunteering and effective recovery
- leadership, decision-making and data availability
- reducing risk via targeted collaborations at the interface of insurance, business and community needs.

The conference included the launch of the *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience Handbook*, Disaster Resilient Australia-New Zealand School Education Network National Forum and a virtual afternoon tea hosted by the Australian Disaster Resilience Network.

The task at hand is harnessing the knowledge shared and guidance available to take individual and collective action to reduce disaster risk and strengthen resilience.

Recent history has brought forward events that are unprecedented, but not unforeseeable. Our world is interconnected and the cascading impacts of hazards on health, society, the economy, the environment and financial and political systems has never been more evident than in 2020. There is a compelling case for broad-ranging efforts to put disaster risk reduction into action, and people's lives and livelihoods are at the heart of it.

View conference presentations and proceedings at www.knowledge.aidr.org.au/collections/australian-disaster-resilience-conference.