

Introducing

# HOW *we* SURVIVE

Reshaping  disaster recovery

**EMPA conference**

5 June 2024

David Sanderson, [david.sanderson@unsw.edu.au](mailto:david.sanderson@unsw.edu.au)



# Community centred recovery

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The optimal approach to sustainable disaster recovery

- Gibbs et al, 2021

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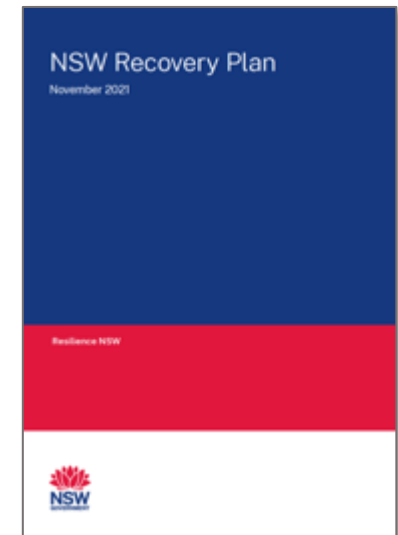
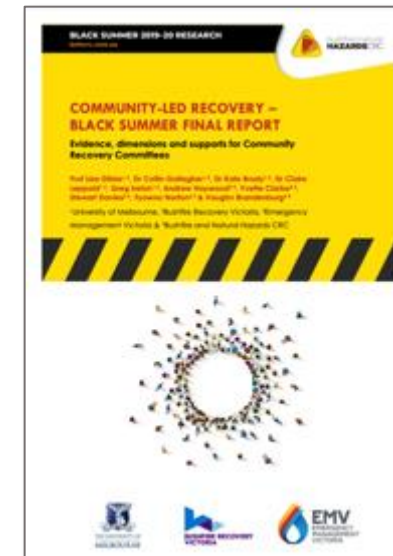
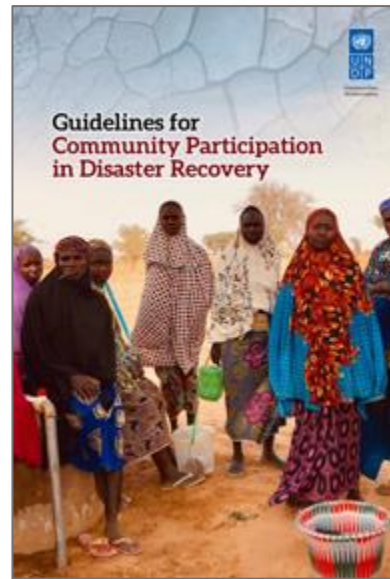
Successful recovery is community-centred, responsive and flexible

- Resilience NSW

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Those most impacted should be able to shape their recovery

- our survey



# Some of the ingredients

place-based  
inclusive  
community-centred  
ownership  
dignity  
trust  
local  
power  
voice  
respect  
structure

But ..

It takes time and energy

Fractured communities

Loud voices can dominate

Marginalised people can be left out

Other disasters come along – is recovery possible?

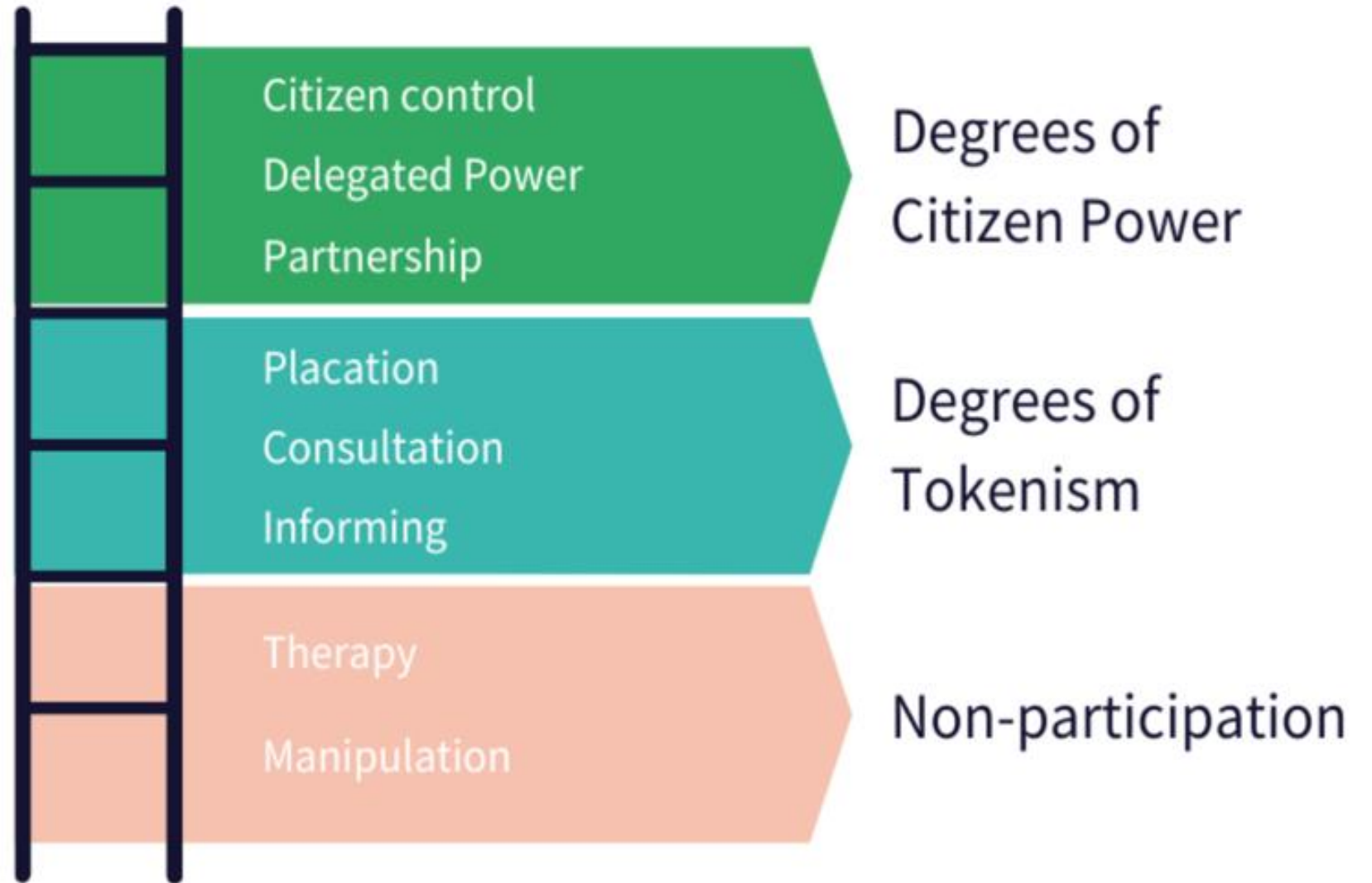
External agencies have their own agendas

Exhaustion and burnout

People can be fickle

How good are we at community-  
centred recovery?

Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969)



Source: commonplace.is

# TIME TO LISTEN

Hearing People  
on the Receiving End  
of International Aid

Mary B. Anderson  
Dayna Brown  
Isabella Jean



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‘There are times that agencies do not provide what people need. The projects come from above, top-down. They should listen to the people’

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- Community members, Myanmar

# Our survey

**Have you been affected by a disaster in the past five years?**

We are conducting an online survey on community-led recovery after a disaster.

The survey is part of a research project led by UNSW Sydney with the Resilient Towns Initiative on how community-led recovery after a disaster can best be supported.

The survey should take less than ten minutes to complete. Your responses are completely anonymous.

The survey can be found by following this QR code:



Or at this website:  
[https://unsw.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_a4qn1u8ip79nll](https://unsw.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a4qn1u8ip79nll)

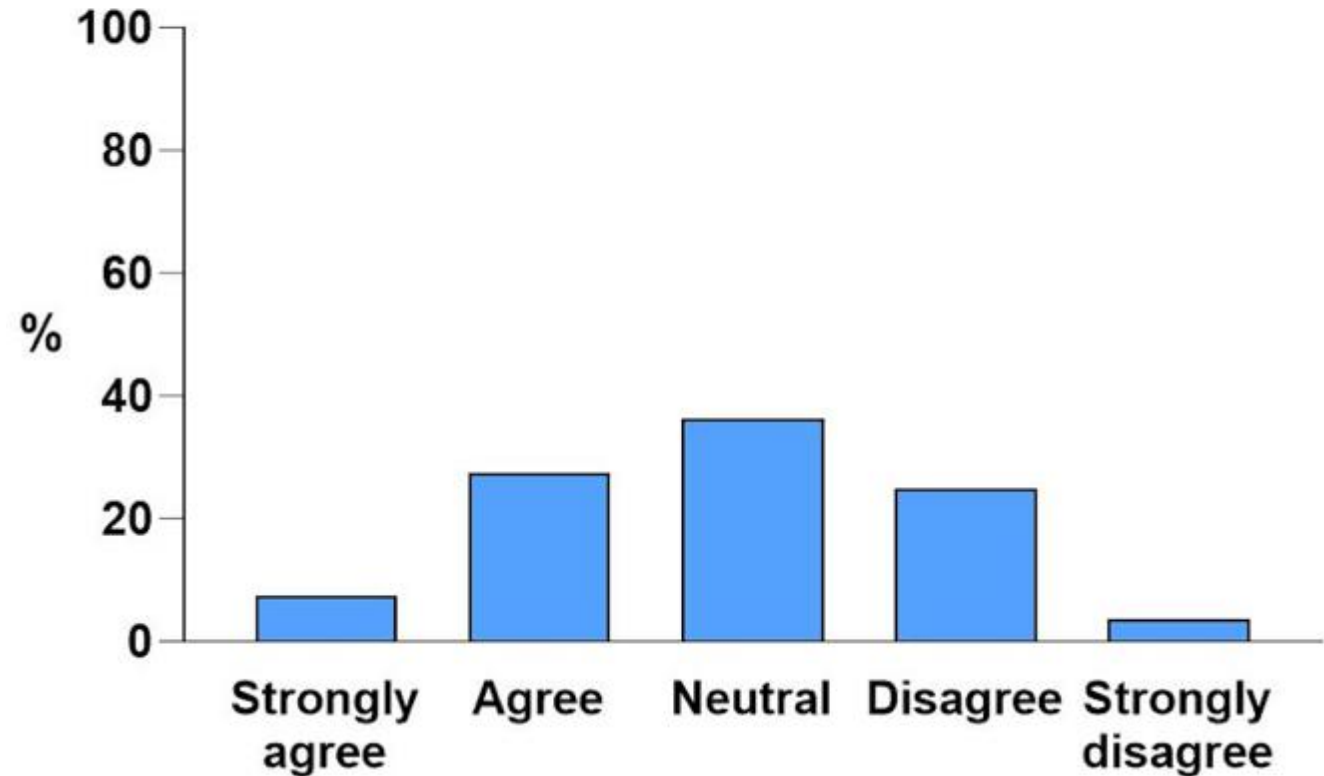
With thanks

This research has received approval from UNSW Ethics (No. HC220846)

Resilient Towns Initiative



## My voice was heard in the recovery



‘Voices of people were not included. Only certain community members appeared to have the 'right' to be making decisions’



# What can hinder community-centred recovery?

- Top-down culture
- Short-termism
- Agency KPIs
- The pressure to spend
- Political pressure



AIDR/AFAC conference 2022:

**‘Systemic change**  
is needed in how we  
understand and frame  
recovery’



Tacloban, Philippines, 2013



Photo: with permission

Northern NSW, 2022

Independent funding to 2064



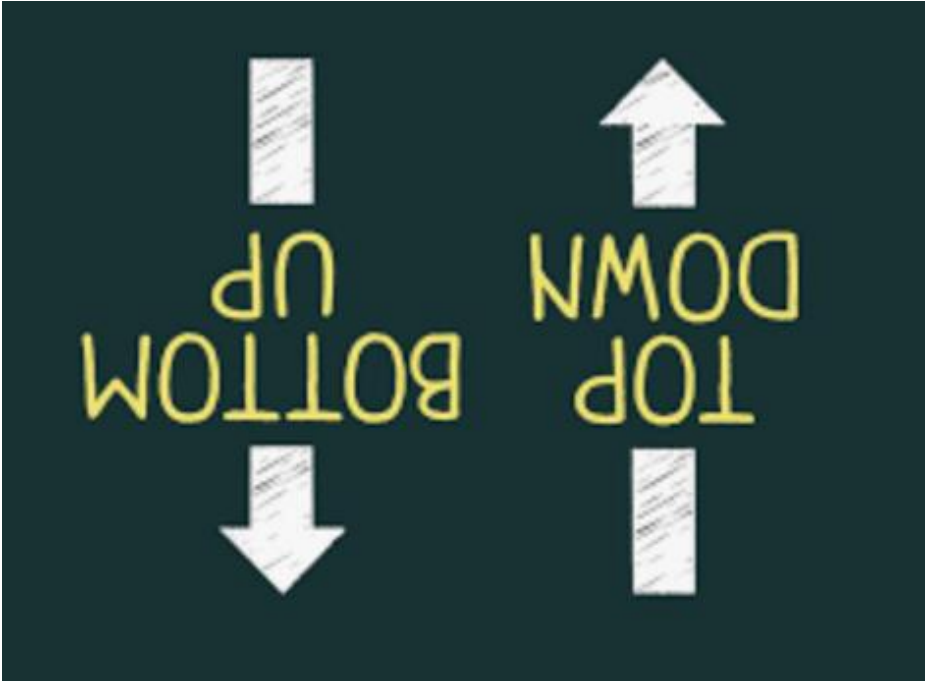
Which systemic change?

What's in the too-hard box?

What do people say you can't change?

# HOW *we* SURVIVE

Reshaping  disaster recovery





HAVE A QUERY?  
Ask our experts



I PAID A BRIBE

I DID NOT PAY A BRIBE

I MET AN HONEST OFFICER

BRIBE HOTLINE

1081  
CITIES

198024  
REPORTS

30.08B  
RUPEES

### ACROSS INDIA

TOTAL REPORTS  
198024

TOTAL AMOUNT  
30.08B

BRIBES PAID  
38167

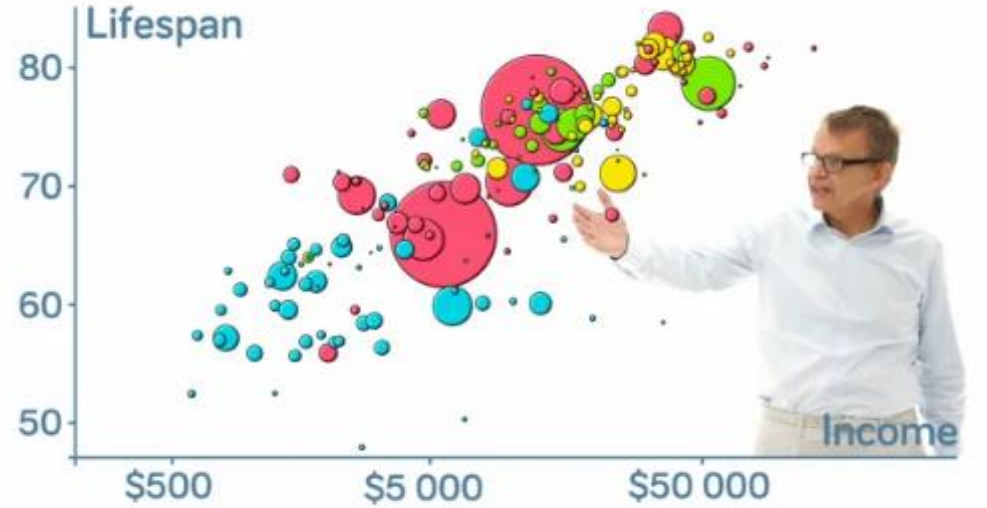
BRIBES FIGHTERS  
3557

HONEST OFFICERS  
1083

BRIBE HOTLINE  
155217



[VIEW BRIBE ANALYTICS](#)



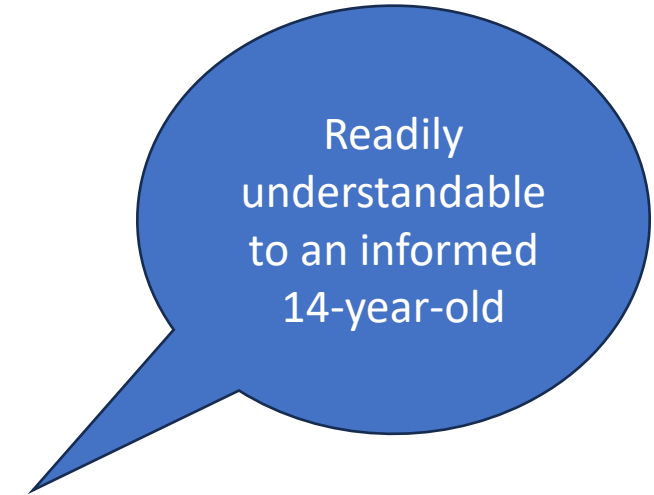


# HOW *We* SURVIVE

## RESHAPING DISASTER RECOVERY.



Coming soon.

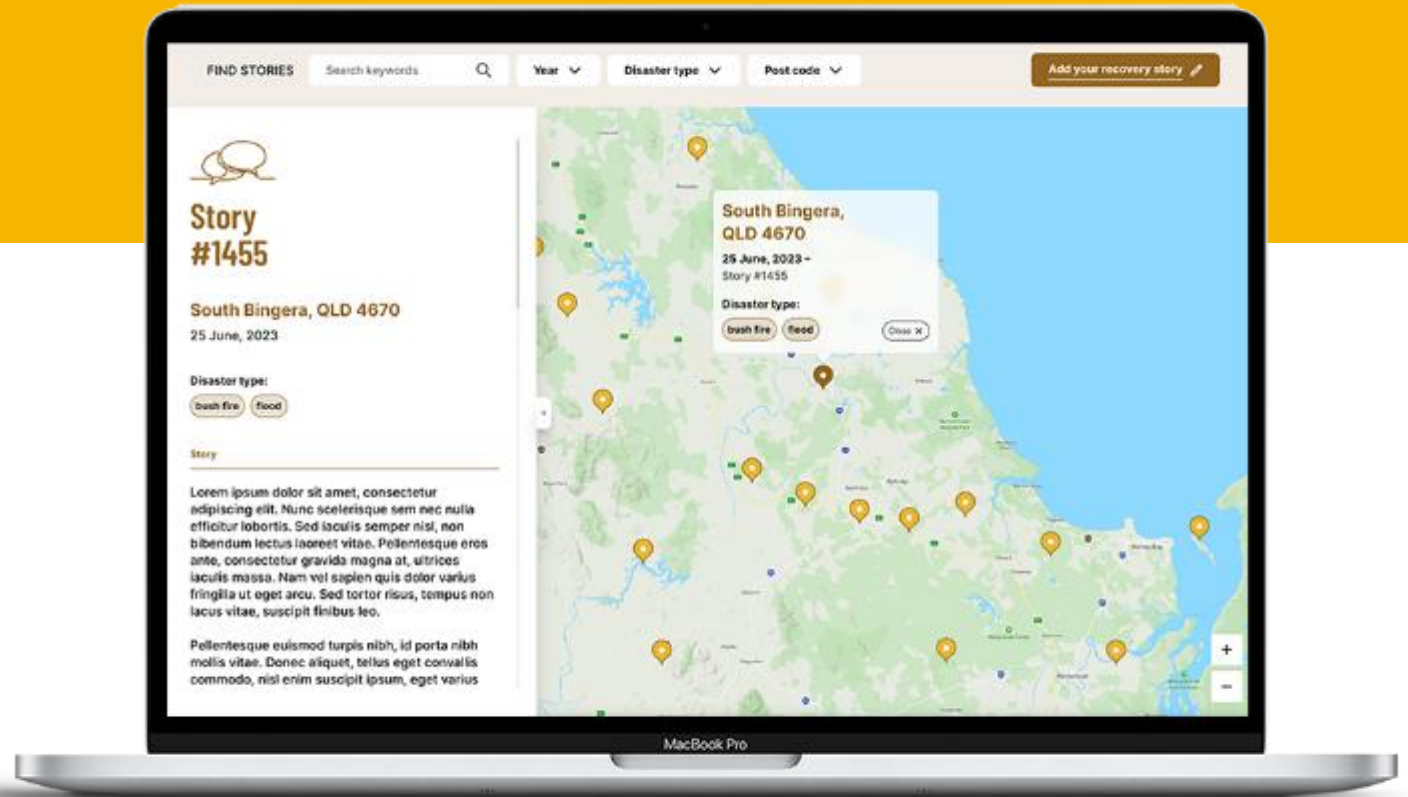
 

Readily  
understandable  
to an informed  
14-year-old

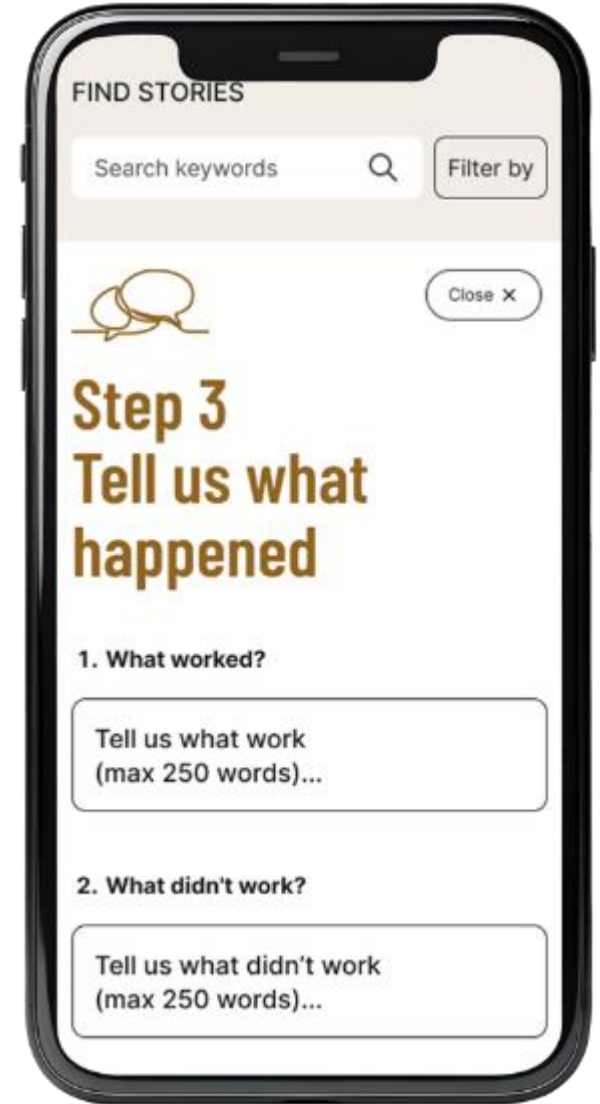
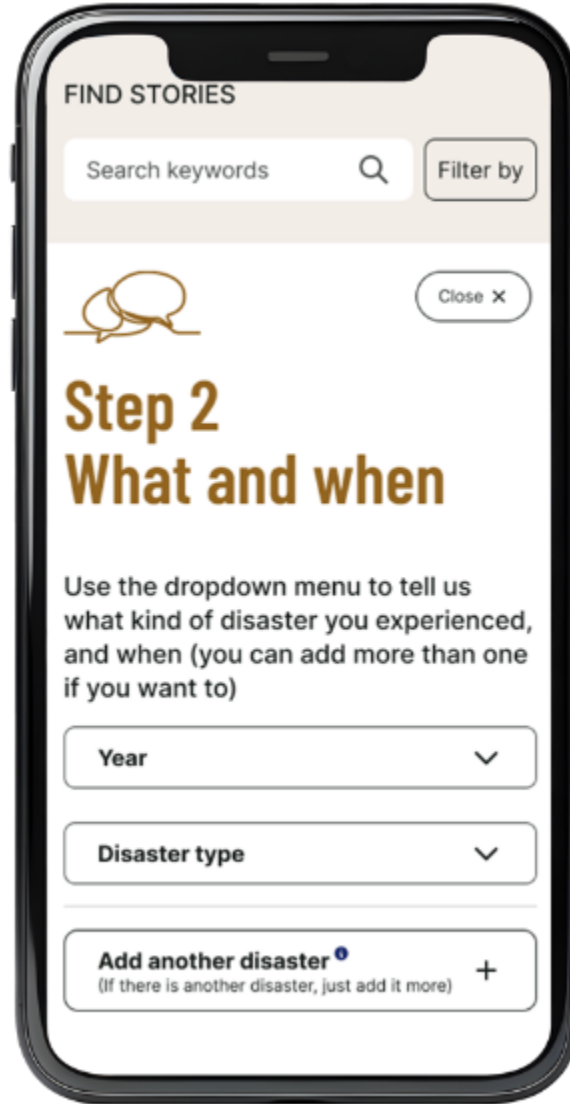
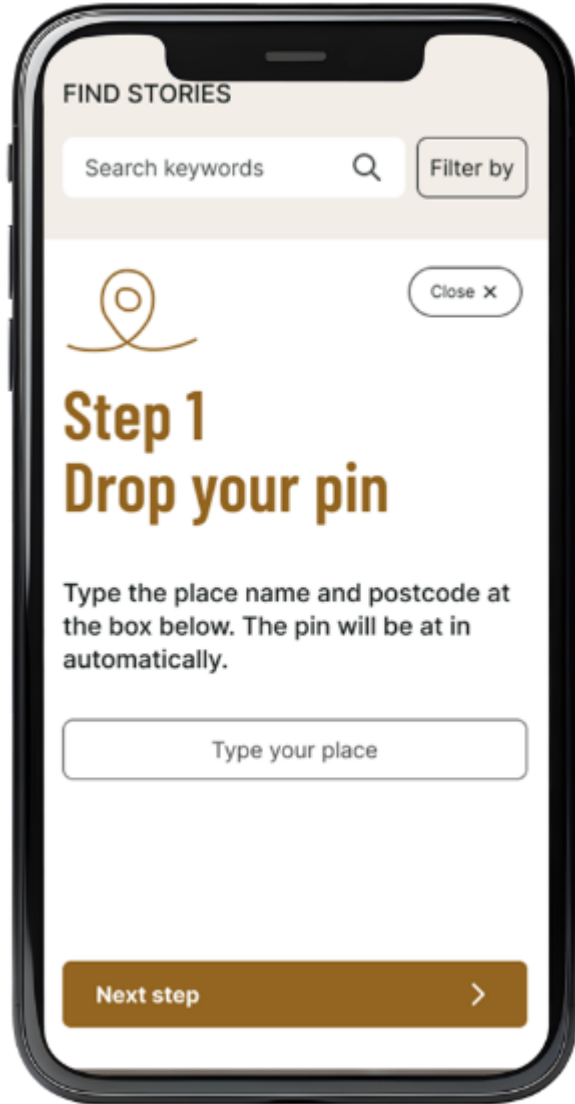
HowWeSurvive.com

# HOW *We* SURVIVE

The *HowWeSurvive Map* collects and shares stories of recovery









# HOW *we* SURVIVE

## What needs to change?



Everyone agrees the best approach to recovery after disaster is community-centred, where people's voices are heard and acted on. In reality this rarely happens.

Government agencies have ways of doing business that might not include making time to engage with communities. Local councils are usually overwhelmed and under-resourced. Non-government organisations (NGOs), community groups and others may be over-stretched and similarly under-resourced.

This though can change. Disaster recovery can be reshaped to put people at the centre of decisions that affect them and their families. Responding agencies can find better ways to listen and to support communities more successfully. And, through better recovery, the threat of future disasters can be reduced or even prevented altogether.

### SHARE YOUR STORY

Listening to people in communities affected by disaster and learning from their experiences is our first step. We want to hear from you!



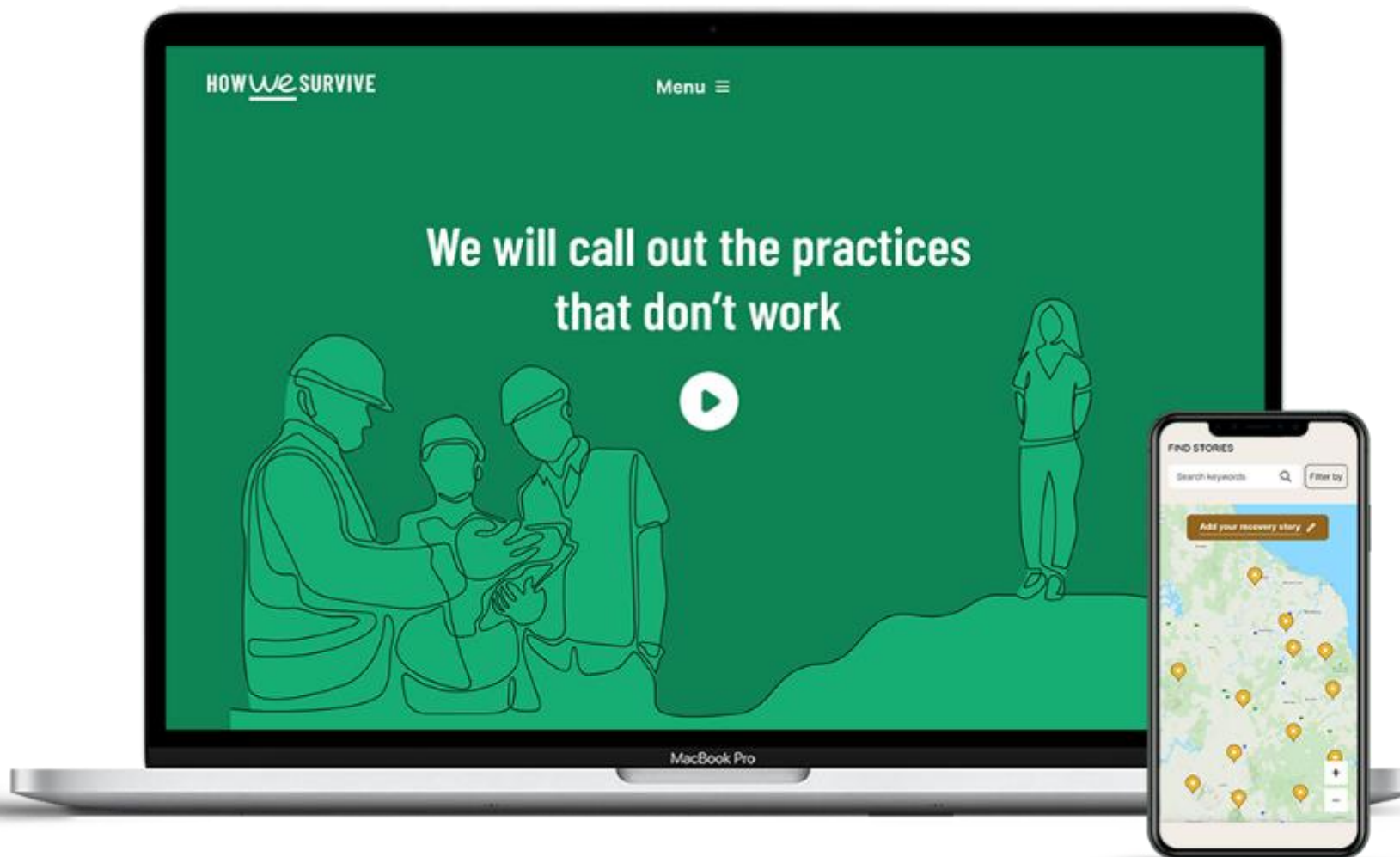
Add your story of recovery and resilience to the HowWeSurvive story map



# What needs to change?

## Evidence based advocacy

# HOW we SURVIVE



# HOW *We* SURVIVE

HOW *We* SURVIVE Menu

## What can help?

A future where communities have all the support they need to recover from disaster on their own terms – it's possible, but to get there we need to start thinking differently. We're beginning by looking at some of the areas where change is most urgently needed.

**LISTENING TO PEOPLE**

### Talking to the experts

Providing adequate housing after a disaster is complicated. Temporary housing often comes at a high cost, and the uncertainty of not knowing when or how to move back into permanent housing will be achieved. For people who don't own their own home and who rent or live in care internally, the options can be particularly limited.

In Australia, many communities affected by disaster are also dealing with a widespread housing crisis. This means that options for emergency, temporary and long-term housing are significantly affected by an existing lack of housing. Moreover, disaster recovery payments and other kinds of assistance are often based on a person's housing situation, leaving some people even more vulnerable to the effects of disaster.

**LISTENING TO PEOPLE**

### Listening to people

We will use our independence to listen and learn from communities about what works best for them in post-disaster recovery. We will undertake surveys and visit disaster-affected communities. We will review the actions of emergency response agencies, praise what works and challenge what could work better.

**And we will document all of this in the State of Listening report.**

We aim to produce the report every two years, and in so doing build up a long-term body of evidence about what works best for community-centred disaster recovery.

We will present and promote our report to as wide an audience as possible, using the findings of the report to emphasise what works, and call out practice that erodes community voices.

**We plan to release our first report towards the end of 2025. Join the HowWeSurvive mailing list for updates.**

[Get updates](#)

**TACKLING CORRUPTION**

### Tackling corruption

Climate-fuelled 'natural disasters' such as bushfires, floods and cyclones are not as natural as they seem. Evidence suggests that corrupt processes and poor governance of construction and infrastructure projects, and their funding, increase the vulnerability of our communities. Issues including improper certification, poor building and design practices and building in dangerous locations (such as flood plains) contribute to greater damage and disruption to communities when floods, bushfires and other hazards occur.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE BE LOOKING AT?

What are the areas **you** think we should be researching, either to unpack their contribution to disaster, or to help drive the change to recovery led by communities?

Send your ideas to us in a text or a voice message.

## Unpacking community-led recovery

Community-led approaches to recovery are widely considered to be more successful and sustainable than 'top down' approaches. Indeed, 'use community-led approaches' has been included as one of the six National Principles for Disaster Recovery in Australia.

Despite this there are still questions about what the term 'community-led recovery' means, and how it should be enacted to best support disaster-affected communities. Additionally there are challenges involved in asking communities to lead recovery efforts at a time when community members are facing intense demands and pressures, and significant disruption.

**DEFINING 'COMMUNITY-LED RECOVERY'**

We are partnering with the University of Melbourne on a project to clarify what the term 'community-led recovery' means, and how different groups might view it differently.

**BUILDING A TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY-LED RECOVERY**

We're also developing tools to support community-based groups that are heavily involved in recovery, including tools to help establish governance structures, define the scope of the activity and map networks of supporters and allies.

## Focusing on housing

Housing recovery after a disaster is fraught with challenges. Temporary shelter is usually very expensive and for many presents new problems. Insulating homes can take years. For people who rent or live more informally, the options can be very limited.

Many communities affected by disaster are also dealing with a long-running housing crisis, with a shortage of homes and high costs to buy. Disaster recovery payments and other kinds of assistance are often based on a person's housing situation, leaving some people even more vulnerable to the effects of disaster.

**FINDING OUT WHAT WORKS BEST**

There is no magic bullet to housing recovery after disaster, but we know that some options work better than others. Building on research we are currently undertaking for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) we will seek out the housing solutions that work best for the people who need help the most, in the short, medium and long term.

**ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHT TO HOUSING**

We recognise that housing is a human right. Using international law as a framework of reference, we are undertaking research to help promote the right to housing in the context of disaster recovery. We are working in particular with more marginalised groups in Australia with our partner organisation at UPRHR. [Timeline March 14.](#)

## Tackling corruption

Climate-fuelled 'natural disasters' such as bushfires, floods and cyclones are not as natural as they seem. Evidence suggests that corrupt processes and poor governance of construction and infrastructure projects, and their funding, increase the vulnerability of our communities. Issues including improper certification, poor building and design practices and building in dangerous locations (such as flood plains) contribute to greater damage and disruption to communities when floods, bushfires and other hazards occur.

# SAVE THE DATE

## Introducing **HOW *we* SURVIVE**

**Reshaping Disaster Recovery**

Monday, 2 September 2024

12:30pm - 6:00pm

Sydney, TBA

[www.howwesurvive.com](http://www.howwesurvive.com)

