



## UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Successful recovery is based on an understanding of the community context. Recovery should:

- appreciate the risks faced by communities;
- acknowledge existing strengths and capacity, including past experiences;
- be culturally sensitive and free from discrimination;
- recognise and respect differences; and
- support those who may be more vulnerable; such as people with disabilities, the elderly, children and those directly affected.

## RECOGNISING COMPLEXITY

Successful recovery acknowledges the complex and dynamic nature of emergencies and communities. Recovery should recognise that:

- information on impacts is limited at first and changes over time;
- affected individuals and communities have diverse needs, wants and expectations, which are immediate and evolve rapidly;
- quick action to address immediate needs is both crucial and expected;
- disasters lead to a range of effects and impacts that require a variety of approaches; they can also leave long-term legacies;
- conflicting knowledge, values and priorities among individuals, communities and organisations may create tensions;
- emergencies create stressful environments where grief or blame may also affect those involved;
- the achievement of recovery is often long and challenging and
- existing community knowledge and values may challenge the assumptions of those outside the community.

## USING COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES

Successful recovery is responsive and flexible, engaging communities and empowering them to move forward. Recovery should:

- centre on the community, to enable those affected by a disaster to actively participate in their own recovery;
- seek to address the needs of all affected communities;
- allow individuals, families and communities to manage their own recovery;
- consider the values, culture and priorities of all affected communities;
- use and develop community knowledge, leadership and resilience;
- recognise that communities may choose different paths to recovery; ensure that the specific and changing needs of affected communities are met with flexible and adaptable policies, plans, and services; and build strong partnerships between communities and those involved in the recovery process.

## ENSURING COORDINATION OF ALL ACTIVITIES

Successful recovery requires a planned, coordinated and adaptive approach based on continuing assessment of impacts and needs. Recovery should:

- be guided by those with experience and expertise, using skilled and trusted leadership;
- reflect well-developed planning and information gathering;
- demonstrate an understanding of the roles, responsibilities and authority of other organisations and coordinate across agencies to ensure minimal service disruption;
- be part of an emergency management approach that integrates with response and contributes to future prevention and preparedness;
- be inclusive, using relationships created before and after the emergency;
- have clearly articulated and shared goals based on desired outcomes;
- have clear decision-making and reporting structures;
- be flexible, take into account changes in community needs or stakeholder expectations;
- incorporate the planned introduction to and transition from recovery-specific actions and services; and focus on all dimensions; seeking to collaborate and reconcile different interests and time frames.

## EMPLOYING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Successful recovery is built on effective communication with affected communities and other stakeholders. Recovery should:

- ensure that all communication is relevant, timely, clear, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent;
- recognise that communication with a community should be two-way, and that input and feedback should be sought and considered over an extended time;
- ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations, addresses a variety of communication needs, and is provided through a range of media and channels;
- establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communication with all organisations and individuals; and
- repeat key recovery messages because information is more likely to reach community members when they are receptive.

## ACKNOWLEDGING AND BUILDING CAPACITY

Successful recovery recognises, supports and builds on community, individual and organisational capacity. Recovery should:

- assess gaps between existing and required capability and capacity;
- support the development of self-reliance;
- quickly identify and mobilise community skills and resources;
- acknowledge that existing resources will be stretched, and that additional resources may be required;
- recognise that resources can be provided by a range of stakeholders;
- understand that additional resources may only be available for a limited period, and that sustainability may need to be addressed;
- provide opportunities to share, transfer and develop knowledge, skills and training;
- understand when and how to disengage; and
- develop networks and partnerships to strengthen capacity.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Emergency Manual, Disaster Recovery EMA 2004

<sup>2</sup> CSMAC 2004, Review of community support and recovery arrangements following disaster, FACS 2004