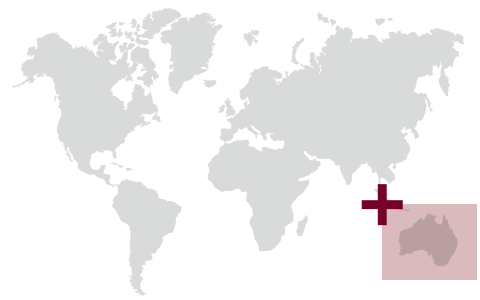


Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities



AT A GLANCE

Name

Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities

Duration

Since 2012

Focus area

Australia

Target group

Communities, government and businesses

Funds available

Members jointly contribute resources to support the Roundtable's research projects.

The project is jointly implemented by ...

Australian Red Cross, IAG, Investa, Munich Re, Optus, Westpac

The core objective is ...

to work collaboratively with governments to effect change in public policy and increase investment aimed at building safer and more resilient communities as well as to actively improve the capacity of people and businesses to better withstand future natural disasters.

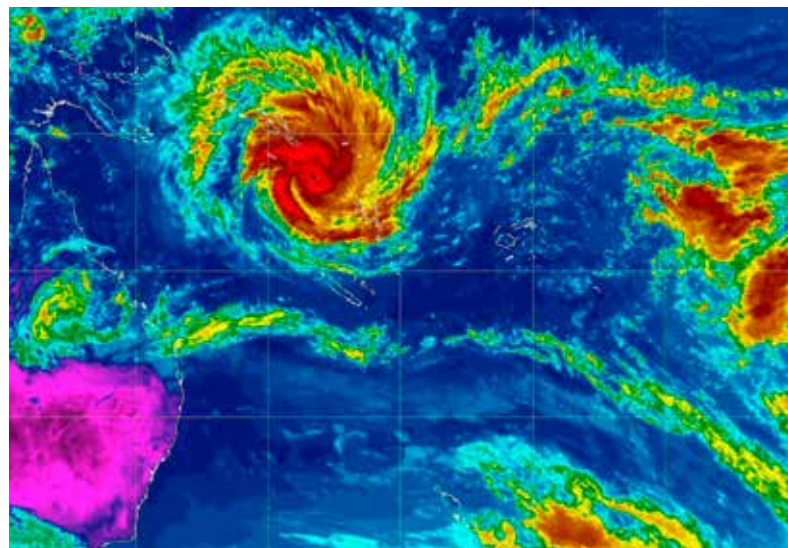


BACKGROUND

2011 was the worst year on record for natural hazard events (e.g. floods, cyclones, hailstorms, bushfires) in Australia, resulting in total economic losses of around AUD 10 billion (USD billion) incurred in that year alone. There was a devastating toll on lives, property and businesses and a psychological impact on families and communities.

Natural disasters are increasing in frequency and severity, as are the costs to Australian lives, livelihoods and property. Spending on post-disaster recovery (97%) far outweighs spending on community resilience (3%). Prioritised investment in mitigation and preparedness and a broad, shared response are needed to build community resilience and reduce the significant economic costs and social dislocation caused by natural disasters.

In May 2012, IAG sponsored the Risk Matters Summit. The Summit helped IAG identify key issues, resources and sectors necessary to building a meaningful coalition that could address these challenges.



IAG initiated the formation of the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities in December 2012.

APPROACH

The Roundtable is a multi-stakeholder, cross-industry partnership covering diverse sectors including insurance (IAG), banking (Westpac), telecommunications (Optus), commercial real estate (Investa), reinsurance (Munich Re), and not-for-profit (Australian Red Cross).

Each Roundtable member has a direct exposure to natural hazard events and their impacts. They have a crucial role in community planning or disaster recovery and all have supported customers and communities affected by the devastating effects of floods, storms and bushfires. Roundtable members also believe it is of national importance to make Australian communities safer and more resilient to natural hazards and share an interest in developing sustainable long-term solutions that can protect lives and property.

The Roundtable members are jointly committing resources to work constructively with governments to deliver in five critical areas.

- 1. Community education:** to increase community awareness about exposure to natural hazards and how vulnerability can be reduced.
- 2. Risk information:** to identify and prioritise key risk areas.
- 3. Adaptation research:** to provide research and global best practice standards to help future proof communities.
- 4. Mitigation infrastructure:** to identify cost effective mitigation strategies to save money in key risk communities and protect lives and infrastructure.
- 5. Strategic alliances:** to use Roundtable members' business networks and relationships as platforms to advocate change.

To achieve these objectives, the Roundtable's advocacy is based on robust economic facts. As such, its first major undertaking was to commission and release a White Paper: Building our Nation's Resilience to Natural Disasters. This White Paper was released in June 2013.

Encouraged by the response from the Australian government, the Roundtable has gone on to release three companion reports: (Building an Open Platform for Natural Disaster Resilience Decisions (July 2014); The Economic Cost of the Social Impact of Natural Disasters (March 2016); and Building Resilient Infrastructure (March 2016)).

A fifth paper entitled Building Resilience to Natural Disasters in our States and Territories will be released in November 2017.

The research papers inform and drive activities, including:

- 1.** to demonstrate the economic case that investing in mitigation lessens the need for recovery expenditure
- 2.** advocate for a national open platform to centralise key natural disaster data and research
- 3.** promote an integrated approach to community resilience and champion the effective engagement of business in building capacity
- 4.** support government and industry decisionmakers to make better infrastructure investment decisions by integrating resilience into planning, design and building processes
- 5.** help to strengthen the technical capacity of infrastructure practitioners – from university students, to architects,



engineers, town planners, government agencies and private sector project managers – to understand and value resilience as an integral part of forward-thinking infrastructure design

6. spread awareness of the significant economic cost of the social impacts of natural disasters and encourage the adoption of strategies to minimise them
7. educate the community about risk, particularly from extreme weather events.

CHALLENGES

1. When the Roundtable was formed, building resilience to natural disasters was not a widely thought of, or understood, policy discipline.
2. Policy reform is not always quick to achieve, even if a number of stakeholders are aligned on the key problems and how to address them.
3. Increasing the focus on mitigation and resilience requires changes to long-held policy and financing structures across different levels of government.

OUTCOMES

FoodSECuRE was fast-tracked to respond early to the impacts of drought in the context El Niño 2015 in Guatemala and Zimbabwe. The fast-track response enabled to successfully test the forecast-based finance window of the facility in Zimbabwe and Guatemala ahead of the impacts of the anticipated droughts. In both cases, resources were released before poor agricultural seasons to help farmers implement measures to reduce the impacts of droughts.

In Zimbabwe, WFP with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture's extension service (AGRITEX) field-tested the FoodSECuRE Window I Early Action modality in five wards of Mwenezi district to bolster the resilience capacity of affected small holder farmer households through promoting the cultivation of traditional drought tolerant small grains (Sorghum). AGRITEX provided extension officers in the 5 wards of Mwenezi district reaching lead farmers. The lead farmers cascaded the training through practical demonstrations

to ordinary farmers. AGRITEX also have supervisors at district level who provided support to the wards level extension officers. Initial results are promising: FoodSECuRE activities led to 11 percent more agricultural production value (in USD) compared to non-benefiting households. The food security situation for households benefiting from these early action interventions could be stabilized.

In Guatemala, WFP in coordination with Ministry of Agriculture field-tested FoodSECuRE Window I Early Action and Window II Early Response modalities to reinforce the resilience capacity of drought-affected smallholder farmers households in the Sinaneca community of San Jorge municipality, through soil and water conservation structures, building small rain water harvesting structures for irrigation purposes, provision of drought resistant seeds, training of leading farmers on soil water and agroforestry activities, and agriculture and water management activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. The Roundtable believes that it can achieve more through the sharing of respective expertise and insights. They seek to work collaboratively with Government and contribute solutions, rather than just identify problems. The Roundtable provides research and information to support evidence based policy reform and continues to update and expand its research on the increasing costs of natural disasters to the people, communities and the economy.
2. Securing policy reform in a multi-jurisdictional environment is difficult to achieve. Genuine reform requires support from all levels of government and a commitment to increased upfront investment for returns over the longer-term.



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For more on the project:

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© Flooding in Bundaberg, Queensland, 2013

© Satellite image: Cyclone Yasi approaching Queensland, 2011

© Rural Fire Service volunteers in New South Wales battling spot fires, January 2013

November 2017

For more on implementation:

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DISCLAIMER

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