

Care through Disaster Launch Transcript

Amanda Kelly 00:10

Hello, everybody, we're just waiting for a few moments as we let people into the room. We've had fantastic response today, so it just might take a few moments. So just bear with us while we invite everybody in.

Amanda Kelly 00:39

Hi everyone, we're just, we're just inviting people in, we'll just be ready for you in a moment.

Amanda Kelly 00:52

Rachel or Lily, if you give me a little thumbs up, if you could, when we think we've got everybody in the room, that'd be great.

Amanda Kelly 01:11

Thanks for coming everybody. It is so lovely to have you join us today. My name is Amanda Kelly, and I'm the CEO of Women's Health Goulburn North East, and I'll be your facilitator today. And I'd like to start today's launch of our Care through Disaster report by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands from which we're all coming in today, this vast and beautiful land, and we have people from right across it, and I want to pay my respects to Elder's past and present and extend that respect to any First Nations people that are on the call with us today. I'd also like to acknowledge the, the care and the, you know, the custodianship of tens of thousands of years, this, of this beautiful land that we have, and today, we'll be talking about our land, and the way that we live in it as it is today. And I think that we can't separate that from the the care, as I said, and you know, the connection that is our First Nations people with our country, and of course, we're on the country too. So it's up to us to be part of that custodianship. And I just want to acknowledge also that it always was and and always will be Aboriginal land.

Amanda Kelly 02:48

I would first of all like to just give you a brief overview of what this project is about. And then I have my wonderful co-hosts here with me, Millie, and Rachel, who will be speaking very soon. So I will introduce them, I'm sure that many of you know them very well. So, I think that everybody is aware of the disasters that have been occurring right across the world and Australia has, we have had our fair share of them. And Women's Health Goulburn North East works in regional Victoria, and much of the land that we work on has been impacted well, by drought, by flood, by I'm gonna say locusts and plagues, and bushfires, and then again, more floods.

Amanda Kelly 03:50

And so we've been working in this space, trying to understand the impact of disasters on, on our communities, and particularly for us, the way that gender impacts how we prepare for, live through and recover from disaster. And we say, you know, disasters seem to be coming thicker and faster. And so we've been working with Australia reMADE on a couple of different projects. And one of the things that,

which I will tell you about in just a moment, but Women's Health Goulburn North East is very interested in thinking about the future that we want and creating that for ourselves in our regional communities, but also right across Australia. And for us, this is our work sits in the space of primary prevention and health promotion. So primary prevention is about imagining how we want things to be and then taking steps towards that.

Amanda Kelly 04:54

So the, we first met up with Australia reMADE A few years ago now when they were doing their, their public good work. So, Australia reMADE exists to support ambitious and collaborative and transformative change makers to reMAKE more of the world that we want. So, they're an independent, not for profit, and they're here for anyone that aligns with their vision and values. And for Women's Health Goulburn North East, it's a perfect match. We see that beautiful vision that Australia reMADE is reaching out and thinking about, and we want that too. So, the public good work in 2022, Australia reMADE talked to people across the nation about what they want for their communities, and found that once people's basic needs are met, they want the public good. They want the opportunity to connect with each other, with place, they want to care and be cared for and contribute to their communities. And so we saw that...so we worked with Australia reMADE to talk about these different areas.

Amanda Kelly 06:09

And most recently, with the floods in 2022, across much of Victoria, we started to think about it, there's the basic needs that people have, of course, through any disaster. You know, they need to be sheltered, they need to be safe, they need to be, you know, that they need to have their basic needs met. And that's a very efficient way of looking at the world. It's a way that "we need to get this done. And then we need to get this done, and everybody will be okay." But at Women's Health Goulburn North East, we started to think about the work we've been doing with Australia reMADE and thinking about care. And care is one of the key concepts that we want to look at in our work. And often care is thought of as fuzzy or women's work. But in fact, care is an integral part of who we are as human beings and how we want, how we need to be in the world and how we want to interact with each other. So we came together - and Australia reMADE was of course the first people we thought of - and we said to them, we want to understand what it is to care through disaster. And so here we are today, launching our report.

Amanda Kelly 06:09

And I just want to acknowledge how many people in this room today have spent their lives caring - caring through disasters. Who have spent their lives thinking about policy and thinking about practice, and being in your own communities, maybe volunteering - maybe visibly volunteering, or even visibly volunteering - there are so many things that we do to support each other through these disasters. So I want to acknowledge those of you in the room and say thank you for the work that you do. And thank you for spending that time with us today.

Amanda Kelly 08:14

So I, as I said, I we've got, in a moment on the introduce million Rachel, but before that I've got a tiny little bit of housekeeping. We originally were going to do this as a as a meeting so we could see all of

your faces, and you could see each other and we could interact. But you've got the three of us on the screen, which I'm sure is lovely for you. But please do hop in the chat - and I can see messages popping up - please hop in the chat. Please introduce yourself, tell us which country you're from. Tell us about your land that you're on, introduce who you are and what you do, or just say hi, connect with people that you may know and connect and say hi to people that you don't, it will be lovely to have that. The other thing is that we will have time for questions later on. So we have the Q and A section. So please feel free to pop your questions into the Q and A. And we will, we'll have a look at those and we'll have a look at those later on.

Amanda Kelly 09:21

So the first the first of my duties as facilitator today is to introduce Rachel Hay, and it's an absolute pleasure to introduce Rachel. Rachel's a researcher, writer and a campaigner for climate action. She's based in niapluna/Hobart and she's the Research and Project Officer at Australia reMADE and she worked on the Care through Disaster project. That's actually, actually a very tiny little bit - she drove that Care through Disaster project and, and is primary responsible for what you're seeing our launch today. So in other lives, she secured a \$10 million divestment from fossil fuels at Fossil Free UTAS, lobbied to have Tasmania's climate change strengthened within the Australian Institute, and she pushes the Tasmanian Government to reduce its transport emissions with Climate Tasmania. So I would like to hand over to Rachel now. Thank you, Rachel.

Rachel Hay 10:27

Amazing, thank you, Amanda. I am just going to share my screen. I think you might get a little portion of my trip to Europe. Yep, there you go. Okay, so as Amanda said, we know that we're living in disasters, now. It's the new normal. And communities know this as well. They've been on the frontlines experiencing climate change fuelled floods and fires alongside the COVID-19 pandemic. And again, and again, I think what we've seen is that their response has been to care for each other. So, you know, from sandbagging your neighbor's house to giving them a shoulder to cry on - care is the glue that really holds together when times get tough. So, in this increasingly disaster prone world, it's clear that we need a new approach to disaster management, and that we need to focus on this care. So I'm going to talk to you about the conversations that we had with communities, about how they want to care and be cared for, and what we heard from those communities.

Rachel Hay 11:16

So before I do that, though, I just want to acknowledge that I'm here in nipaluna/Hobart on the country of the muwinina people, and that the palawa people are the continuing custodians. And here, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been caring for community and country for tens of thousands of years. And they've continued to care through disasters, especially that of colonisation. And with no Voice to Parliament, I think it's really up to us as people to elevate their voices, including in the context of disasters, which often disproportionately affect First Nations people. And I think if we do that, if we you know, focus on their ideas of care, that not just First Nations people, but non-First Nations, people can really be better cared for.

Rachel Hay 12:35

So the research that we did: over a month long period this year, we talked to people, mainly in the Goulburn Valley area and North East Victoria, through interviews, a survey and kitchen table conversations. And we asked them, what would it look like for communities to care and be cared for through disaster, and what needs to be in place for this to become a reality. So we had around 100 responses from people who had different experiences of caring through disaster, from those in the frontlines and the CFA fighting fires to, you know, someone at the Neighbourhood House who helped someone with a feed, with a muffin. And we also drew on experts, community experiences and research from around regional Victoria and beyond. And that was because we were mindful of including a range of perspectives whilst also not over consulting groups, which often are over consulted. I think that blended approach really allowed us to strike the right balance.

Rachel Hay 13:35

So, in all the conversations that we had, we heard the same three things: for community care and be cared for through disaster they need to be seen, safe and supported. So firstly, seen by each other and organisations, for their vulnerabilities, as well as their expertise, so their needs can be anticipated and the agency respected. So we know that care is the glue that binds us together, both in good times and bad, from moving a tree that's fallen over the road during a storm to making sure those during a tough in the community have enough food to stock their pantries for the next 72 hours. When communities truly see each other before disaster strikes, that's when they're more equipped to make sure that no one gets left behind during disasters. So, for example, Hannah - a local resident in Yackandandah - she knew her neighbours simply from talking over the fence. And they knew that she didn't have a car so when the fires came through, they offered to help her, to get her pets out, to get her possessions out. And beyond just, you know, talking your neighbours, your family and your friends, government funded spaces and organisations really helped to foster the vital community connections that are needed both in good times and bad. So, for example, Neighbourhood Houses - they're often a place where connection can be made before disaster strikes, but they're also a really vital place when disaster does happen. And I know Millie's gonna say more about the infrastructure of connection in a minute, so I'll leave that for her.

Rachel Hay 15:14

And we also heard that, you know, whether it's knowing people whose first language isn't English, and who will need translations for emergency warnings, or, you know, to which streets will be cut off during the flood, locals are really experts on their areas. And they really want this expertise to be recognised by those seeking to help them, you know, from the local council to external service providers. So for those organisation, it means really putting in place practices to ensure everyone is seen before disaster strikes, really getting to know communities and the leaders in that local area to follow once disaster does happen.

Rachel Hay 15:58

So secondly, we heard that for communities to care and be cared for through disaster, they need to be safe. For, disasters need to be prevented, where possible, and refuge provided were that can't happen. The communities that we spoke to knew that climate change was fueling with disasters, they were on the frontlines experiencing it. And they really wanted their government to adopt policies which prevent even worse climate change fuelled, fuelled disasters and to keep them safe. And they also expected

government to put in policies which keep them safe by adapting to the climate change already locked in. So, you know, this might mean changing how we develop areas - no new developments on floodplains - keeping the forests up or constructing, not constructing bridges which divert the natural water flow. And there was also a really strong desire to see adaptation practices like First Nations-led fire management, local councils, developing resilience plans with the community, as well as ensuring that, you know, local organisations like the SES have the equipment that they need. We also heard that communities really wanted their spaces retrofitted, to withstand climate impacts. So, from the local bank, to the community hall. And another thing we heard really clearly was the disasters can be prevented and the worst of disasters can be prevented by reMAKING the systems which cause some people to experience disasters worse than others. So, you know, think of how many people would weather next storm better if we had social housing, functioning health systems, and social welfare actually, before disaster strikes.

Rachel Hay 17:55

So, where disasters can't be prevented people in a timely, accurate and accessible information so that they can get to a safe place. So we heard how when information isn't timely or accurate, it actually puts people in danger. So one story we heard was a warning to evacuate was given on information that was then hours late, it meant that people crossed floodwaters and actually were put in danger by that inaccurate warning. We also heard from different community members that they want a different means of information - so that could be text messages to ABC Radio. It's also really important to consider who is receiving that information. So for Aboriginal communities, for example, it might not be appropriate for uniformed official to come and give this information to evacuate.

Rachel Hay 18:56

So, once people do have that information they really no safe place to go in times of danger, and that's a safe place, both physically and psychologically. So usually, public safe places would be evacuation centres. But we heard of a evacuation centres which really just weren't fit for purpose. One story we heard was a man who had a heart condition, and he was in an evacuation centre, which was a basketball court with no air conditioning on a really hot day. We heard of another woman who had a panic attack in an evacuation centre, but really wasn't given any help. So clearly, we need to retrofit community spaces, so they're equipped for everyone, from people with disabilities to mothers and their children. And those evacuation centres also need to be in places which actually makes sense for the community - they need to be their spaces. So we heard of a centre which was constructed, you know, with all the mod cons, everything it needed, but in a time of fire, people went to the old place because that was their place to go. And making people safe, my also mean giving people Mental Health First Aid training or anti-discrimination training people that, you know, might be likely to run these evacuation centres or community leaders.

Rachel Hay 20:22

We also heard how safe places need to be provided after disaster strikes - so in the months and the years of recovery that follow. One story we heard off was an elderly woman who was given a caravan to live in because she'd lost her home, but she couldn't climb the stairs to that caravan. And another family, were charged \$800 a week just to stay in a caravan - and these are people that have lost everything. So I think we really need to try some alternate models here. So you know, what if

community owned assets like caravan parks. What if we were supported to connect before disasters happened so everyone had a spare room to stay in? And what if we had more social housing, so people have a safe place to go before, during and after disasters?

Rachel Hay 21:15

And finally, to care and be cared for through disaster, we heard that communities need to be supported to do what they do best during disaster - care for each other. So the people that we talked to really wanted help to prepare for, for disasters. So it can be as simple as a fridge magnet with a list of things to pack in an evacuation kit. To more support for programs like WHGNE's It's Up to 72, which trained community members on how to look after themselves during disasters. And we also heard how everyone can be involved in this preparation. So really cute example that we heard of was a local SES programme, where they took on a doll house, and the kids helped to pack an evacuation kit for the doll.

Rachel Hay 22:03

So we also really clearly heard that community volunteers need more support to respond to disasters. So the small town of Corryong, for example, they're, they're really fatigued after overlapping disasters, so fires and then the COVID-19 pandemic. And they've gotten to the point where they actually couldn't attend car accidents anymore - there just wasn't enough of them. So what can we do to help these communities? It could mean ensuring community members have more time to volunteer and I think Millie's going to talk a little bit more about that. It could mean training community members who can be flexible during disasters - people who can operate a chainsaw or a heavy vehicle. It can also mean ensuring that community volunteers have the resources that they need. So I think we all heard in the Black Summer Bushfires how the CFA branches didn't even have proper face masks. Sometimes all that's needed is money, given universally, without catches, so the neighbourhood house can provide Woolworths vouchers or the volunteering group can develop food hampers. Or it might be people power. We heard how the ADF often wasn't the right force for disaster response. They have the potential to retraumatise members of the community, and often they, they can't take orders from leaders in the community. And also the Defence Strategic Review acknowledged that, you know, we're going to have more disasters, and the ADF can't cope with being a permanent disaster force. So I think it's time to ask, do we need a permanent disaster force in this country? What would that look like? And how can we enable them to follow community leaders?

Rachel Hay 24:00

And finally, people want to be supported to recover - as long as that may take. So it can be much longer than people expect, as people take time to process what's happened to them and rebuild their communities. So, for example, we heard of local kids who'd only just started to process the trauma from fires a few years before, but the services were being removed. And recovery also may look different to what people expect. So it might be materials to help rebuild your house, but it could also be mental health services, community barbecue, or money to start a local choir.

Rachel Hay 24:45

So I just want to finish by saying you know, in a lot of ways, the things that we've, we've heard and we've talked about aren't new. It's almost obvious that people need to be care and cared for during

disaster, and that they need to be seen, safe and supported. But these are needs that we heard time and time again, are just actually not being fulfilled. From the Congolese community not being able to understand COVID-19 isolation requirements due to lack of translations to people in evacuation centres who were disabled, and there wasn't proper facilities for them. I think the value of this research is the shows that when we centre care in disaster management, you know, it brings it back to the community, how we respond, our collective humanity and our needs and makes sure that no one is left behind. And it takes something which is considered soft, or not necessary, or women's work and shows that it's actually essential, and that we need infrastructure to support it. So that's the end for me, I'll hand back to you Amanda.

Amanda Kelly 25:55

Thank you very much, Rachel. I obviously have read the report a number of times, but it's really good to hear from you, who's collated all of that information and synthesised it and highlighted it for us. And I think that one of the things that strikes me about where we are right now, and this research clearly shows is that, over years, we've been asked to, and supported by government in many different ways to help us through these these disasters, many, as I said, over many years. And so what's happened is, there's been, I guess, a transfer of power or a shift in expectations. And so, often our community is seen as unable to help ourselves and unable to support ourselves. But in fact, people are incredible and can support each other and need a helping hand, but don't necessarily need to be told what to do. A very wise colleague of mine said a little while ago, you know, "if you understand one regional, you know, one regional town, then you understand one regional town." And what you're talking about here is that diversity of needs. And if we only cut to efficiency, yep, we will save people's lives, and that's absolutely key, we need to do that. But what's the quality of our lives as we continue through this and the trauma that we experience through this and so many beautiful examples of how tiny little acts that appear to be very small, but have enormous impact for people. And I think that your last slide really struck me as valuing care. We talk about care, but valuing it is a really key part of what we need to think about when we move forward. So thank you very much for your presentation and all your amazing work, Rachel. I just want to have a little reminder for people that we do have the Q and A section and I'm glad to see that the chat is now working. Thank you. Thank you, Lily for fixing. Just want to shout out to Lily who's helping in the background there chatting away to people and solving problems like getting the chat working. So thank you for that Lily. But we also do have the Q and A so please feel free to pop any questions or comments, or thoughts that you might have into the Q and A - doesn't have to be a question - please make comments as well.

Amanda Kelly 28:42

So my next really exciting thing that I get to do is introduce Dr. Millie Rooney. So Millie is the Co-Director of Australia reMADE. She is a social scientist, a researcher and champion of participatory democracy and politics based, she's also based in nipaluna/Hobart in Tasmania. As a carer for her family, as well as others in her community, caring for those who face chronic illness and disability, Millie is passionate about care, inclusion, and meeting the needs we all have to lead lives up lives off connection, care and contributions. So I will hand over to you Millie.

Dr Millie Rooney 29:25

Thank you so much, Amanda. And thanks, Rachel, for taking us through the seen, safe and supported it's really helpful, amazing work. So I'm also here on muwinina country in lutruwita/Tasmania, and I pay my respects to Elder's past and present. So we know that communities need to be seen, they need to be safe, and they need to be supported. And Rachel has explained what that means in some kind of detail. I want to put that now in a in a slightly bigger context about how care and the work Rachel's been talking about actually shapes how we might think about responding to disaster. And so we can no longer be thinking about just responding to the disaster event itself. We need to be reevaluating the way our societies are put together, organised, resourced, and equipped, so that we can better ride these waves of disruption that we're already starting to ride. And as Rachel said, you know, disaster is no longer the exception. It's the norm. And that's really hard and really uncomfortable and really confronting as we come into Summer. None of us want a future that is more disruptive or more marked by risk or fear - I certainly don't.

Dr Millie Rooney 30:39

But I think the exciting thing about this work is that if we think about disaster through a care lens, it's actually giving us a framework that says, actually building communities that we want to live in, that I want to live in today, is actually a piece of disaster preparation and response infrastructure. And so it's not like we have to add on "oh, we've got to think about responding to the disaster. Oh, is that at the expense of a good life?" No, actually, strong, beautiful, wonderful communities, are disaster prevention and management infrastructure. And I think that's exciting. There's a heap of things we can change about our communities. And here's, here's an opportunity to do that.

Dr Millie Rooney 31:20

Of course, it's going to mean investment from government and from communities, not just in the physical and technical ways we respond to disaster, but also in the infrastructure of community cohesion and relationships. We know that strongly connected communities are much better able to weather the storms. But community isn't magic, you know, like you don't just buy it off the shelf in a pre-made cake packet, you actually have to, you know, grow the wheat yourself, or some weird metaphor that might not work. But it's an investment, community is hard work, and it takes time, and it takes energy and it takes resourcing. And we have to acknowledge this, in these times or it's not going to work. So, you know, it's, it's easier as well, when we think about, well, let's respond to disaster. Let's buy a new fire truck. Let's, you know, work out in evacuation centre, they're really important things. But we also need to be thinking about other things to invest in, like, ways to build community, like community centres, like libraries, like funded festivals, time - time to hang out with our neighbours. And actually, if you look at the federal government's \$1 billion Disaster Ready Fund - which is a mouthful to say - they're actually funding a bunch of quite useful activities that do build community. But it's not enough, we really need to ramp that up.

Dr Millie Rooney 32:44

So the way that Amanda's talked about this a little bit, but the way that we tend to think about disaster at the moment is very much in this efficiency mindset. Which is wonderful, it saves lives, you know, "we've got to get x, many people out of this place, we've got to get a certain amount of resources in." It's a really key way to think about disaster in the moment. But it's not enough. And we can overlay that really useful efficiency model with a care model that actually creates contexts and communities that

mean we're better prepared, and that in itself will save lives when coupled with that efficiency approach. So what does that actually mean to add that in? It means acknowledging that we need time and space and places for human interaction to occur. And we're talking about community interaction with neighbours, like Rachel has talked about, also, time to get to know your community service providers. As Rachel said, if you know the evacuation centre, you know, the people to get help from you've already got a trusting relationship. It's street parties. It's direct democracy, its Citizen's Juries. It's good workplace conditions. Time, spaces and places to engage. And I'm going to keep hammering this home. That is work. That is infrastructure. Yes, we need the fire trucks as well - not saying we don't.

Dr Millie Rooney 34:03

And so how do we enable time? You know, we hear this a lot. As Rachel said, I'd love to, you know, people want to be part of an SES that time because we're working two jobs, or we're looking after children. So what do we do to free up our time to participate? And you know, it's things, it's things like, could we think about...well, first of all, people don't necessarily need money to do this. So it's, we haven't heard and I know, there'll be people on the call with much more experience than me here, but we didn't hear people saying, "oh, I join the volunteer fire association if I was paid," it was more "I don't have time or capacity to participate." So how do we do that? And there's there's big structural changes that would help here. So whether that's a four day work week, whether it's paid volunteer leave, universal basic income, you know, a disaster volunteer system - like there are ways that we could free up time. And I always think imagine, imagine if we worked three days a week paid, and that was enough to feed our families to put a roof over our heads. And then in their spare time, you know, maybe you're going to do some art, maybe volunteer at the library, maybe get your chainsaw ticket, so that when there's a disaster, you can pop in and be part of that practical surge capacity. Like that sounds like a pretty good life to me, you know, a few days to do some painting or learn a new instrument, or just have a coffee with someone you haven't seen for ages. And so we need strong government support to build that kind of buffer capacity for us to participate.

Dr Millie Rooney 35:36

Now there are, I know a lot of public servants do have access to paid disaster leave, and that's fantastic. Often this is leave that is tied to a particular registered type of disaster leave - so, you know, whether you're participating with the Red Cross or the CFA - and that's great, I think there's a potential there to really open that up so that people are, you know, the time it takes to look after your neighbour's kid, because they've been impacted. You know, there's a whole lot of other types of care work and disaster response work that doesn't fit in that traditionally masculine box. We're also seeing quite a few numbers of of large corporations offering this type of disaster leave. In some ways that's great. But I just want to offer a word of caution here that the leaders in that space are financial institutions who are funding fossil fuel investments, which are increasing the disaster risk. So we just need to be a bit wary about, you know, prevention here, and what this looks like. And also, I think, privatising, and individualising, our capacity to respond and recover from disaster is not helpful. Just because you happen to have a good employer who lets you take time off, wonderful for you. But what about somebody who doesn't have that? And that, the way that that then leads to inequality, and actually fragmentation of society is in itself a risk to how we respond to disaster. And, you know, corporations can do a lot of wonderful things like pay their taxes, not contribute to the climate crisis, provide good

jobs, good wages, you know, there's other ways we can build that in, so not saying that big business shouldn't have a role.

Dr Millie Rooney 37:15

So I think some kind of universal response that enables us all to do the disaster work we need to do. And that support, as Rachel pointed out, support for people to prepare to respond and to recover needs to be universal. And I say this, because we know that strongly connected communities are that piece of disaster infrastructure, they're also just very nice to live in. But the way we respond to disaster at a systems level, actually disconnects us a lot of the time. So that, that example I gave about the paid disaster leave in a corporate setting is one example. Another is insurance. So insurance is essentially the act of privatising a collective problem. So if you have money, you can insure against loss or certain types of loss, if you don't, and you're kind of stuffed when disaster strikes, and then you're even further behind than you were before. The Climate Council estimates that one in 25 houses will be uninsurable within six years. That's massive implications for inequality. And where we live and how our populations move and who gets left in disaster prone areas are likely to be the people without the resources. So I think thinking about what are our responses that build cohesion, rather than tear us apart. And another really quick example, is we've heard, you know, people post disaster to get grant funding to, for recovery programmes, it's often really competitive. And, you know, I realise there's resource constraints, and anyone on the call who's doing their best, like shout out to this is not a personal attack, we have a system that sets us up to compete, and that's disruptive. And, you know, on top of all these ways, we're individualising atomised inequality, and all of that contributes to inequality. And we know that inequality, then, of course, means impact of disaster is far worse, and not just on those most vulnerable, but actually impacts that whole community.

Dr Millie Rooney 39:18

So I'd encourage you to ask it when you're thinking about "well how do I apply this?" I'd encourage you to ask, "does this type of disaster prevention, preparedness and response build community? Or does it actually contribute to its fragmentation? How are we investing in community infrastructure and like really funding it? Are we really taking seriously that a coffee with your friends, is disaster infrastructure? I know it's a nice idea, isn't it? We need to take that seriously. That's, that's not a joke. That's very real. And are we glorifying community by failing to support it? We see a lot about you know, the Lismore community and how they responded, you know what amazing community response. But are they being supported right now? Are they being backed these years afterwards? You know, are we putting our money where our mouth is? And how are we making sure people are safe, seen and supported in all that we do?

Dr Millie Rooney 40:12

So really, just to finish up, I say, disruption is here, it's coming. It's not going to be easy. But it's an amazing opportunity and an amazing way to build a life that we all want, that's better than what we have now. And so I think it's very exciting if we can expand how we think about this. And for anyone who wants more detail, would like Rachel or I to chat, you know, more privately with your organisation, like, please reach out. This work is not just done in isolation, this work is building on so many other brilliant pieces of work. And it's going to take all of us actually collaborating and connecting to do what needs to be done. So please use it, please reach out. Yeah, I look forward to hearing from you.

Amanda Kelly 40:56

Thank you, Millie. I am, we've got some great questions coming up. But I just wanted to reflect on what you were saying there - it's systemic change that we need, I think. And one of the things that you also mentioned is, you know, what are we doing? Are we are we actually just building on the system that isn't working already. So we really need to think about the systemic changes that we need. So again, as you say, corporates have a place in this, absolutely - in fact, they have a very big place in doing this work. Is it though, that it is only is about providing individuals with three days emergency leave or something - like that, which is not, again, not to be sneezed at - but is that the best solution that that company can come up with? And I think, you know, as all of us right through the community, we can really have a think about, yeah, are we are we propping up a system that isn't working? Or are we supporting people who are making changes, as you say, like in the Lismore community? You know, in, in our communities here in the north east and Goulburn Valley, you know, the same thing, there are some, my goodness, there's been some amazing work that our local communities have done, are they being supported? It sort of seems like, a year later, no matter what the disaster is, a year later, the fundings ran out, or that people have forgotten about it, or they're on to the next thing. So we need systemic change so that we can support communities, exactly as you're saying Millie, to be part of this.

Amanda Kelly 42:41

And this sort of I'm just going to take, because I get to facilitate and I get to see who's in the Q and A, and this segways really nicely into a question that Carla Lee has put in there. So she's researching intersections between gender and climate and environmental issues at the Women's Environmental Leadership Australia. And her question is, did gender show up as a factor in the research that you've conducted? And my answer is, hell, yes, it did. And I think sometimes when you're in this every day, you can you know, as a women's health organisation, talking about primary prevention, there's a gender lens there, and sometimes it just needs to be highlighted again. And I think we've been talking through this about the fact that care is seen is undervalued, that community connection is undervalued. And while I know, there are men who take this really seriously, and many of them volunteer in our organisations, that background stuff that happens, I talked about invisible volunteering, is often women's work. And women's work is undervalued, no matter where you go. We are underpaid, we are undervalued. The work that we do is not, you know, just think about childcare, just think about housework, just think about picking the kids up from school, think about making lunches, think about all the caring responsibilities that we have, the emotional load, that women often are the ones who take on. And again, it is not - there are men who do this too. So this is not having a go at blokes, because men are part of this and are doing some amazing things in this work. But what we found is that the work that women do is either not seen or not, and not valued. So that's, that's the answer, Carla. In fact, this whole report reflects the fact that care is has not been thought about right through our thinking about emergencies and disasters. So thank you for that. And thank you for letting me get on my little soapbox there for a moment, but it is, it's absolutely underpins all of this.

Amanda Kelly 45:13

So we've got about 15 minutes left. And there's some fantastic questions here. So I'm going to get those out. And I will finish we will finish on time. So I'm going to wrap it up about 28 minutes past so that we can say thank you and wrap up. So I've got a question from Alice and Alison. And I'm sorry, just

because the way my screen is, I can't see where you're from Alice and Alison, but you're interested to hear other's thoughts on the on the alt-ADF permanent disaster recovery service. Should it be centralised like our other emergency services? Or should it be encouraged to be ground up response from within the communities? So I'm wondering, maybe Rachel, is there something that you've seen in the research that you might want to comment on?

Rachel Hay 46:08

Yeah, I think we had both, all of the above. communities, I think, really want their responses for disaster to be centred to them. So I think that means, you know, training up people before disasters, so they know what to do in a disaster. Yeah, they've got a chainsaw ticket, they can be that volunteer force that comes in, and they want to lead disaster response, because they're the people that know their communities. But they do really want to need the support from organisations. It's just about how that's given. And I think, yeah, we did hear people wanted a permanent Disaster Force, made up of ordinary people, paid or volunteers who can come in who have the skills and who can support them in their recovery efforts.

Amanda Kelly 47:05

Thanks, Rachel. Millie, did you want to add anything there?

Dr Millie Rooney 47:10

Really just on the point about one of the reasons for talking about why the Australian Defence Force is not the right organisation to do that. And again, not to dismiss any great work they've done. But it's that thinking about, well, what is the society that we want? And what are the risks of kind of militarising that kind of work? And what are the risks to democracy of that? And I think, you know, Rachel's point about communities wanting to be in control. And we saw I know, you know, I'm pretty sure it's in Aoteroa, in New Zealand - I know there's someone on the call so you might be able to correct me - but communities are kind of prepared for floods for 48 hours or something like that. And I know in the recent floods, actually, no outsiders could get in for at least 72, and maybe longer. And so having the resources available in the communities to respond is really important. And that's partly why I was talking about that, you know, working paid work three days a week, and the rest is sort of buffer capacities, because you can't suddenly become your community's emergency response if you've got three jobs and doing all the childcare, you need a buffer. And much as I hate to say, it's, you know, your drawing time that gets out the window during a disaster, like it will that, that is the least important time. So, so I think, again, it's it's having this central, you know, supporting our communities, you know, from a central from the, from the state level, or federal level, but having communities be able to respond to their own context. Yeah.

Amanda Kelly 48:42

Thank you. Thank you for that question, Alice and Allison. Yeah, I'm just moving my screen around. So this question is from Elise, and as a community affected by the Black Summer Fires, and having experienced the inability of state agencies to keep us safe and supported, we've been looking for resources that might help communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, but we've not found many. Are there any resources, kits, manuals, best practice examples out there that might practically guide local communities and neighbourhoods to work together? And this actually ties in with

another question from Dani, so she's, she says, we're talking about organisations and how they can, how we can support change together. So what's one small action that we can take as individuals to support this care work? So I'm opening that up to either of you.

Rachel Hay 49:52

I think, I think that the best thing that communities can do to figure out how they can prepare for or disaster - I don't know if there's any guides - but I know that there are a mass stories from communities about how they've gotten through it, what they've done. And I think that they are really inspiring, as well as instructive examples. So, for example, I know I'm going to out myself as a Tasmanian here by not being able to pronounce this but think of Tarnagulla in Victoria, they've developed a community resilience plan. I heard as another story from the Goulburn North East region, about the Lighthouse Project, who were a great community organised volunteer group - about 200 people during the floods came together and, and put food packs together for people and even lended people, their cars, lended a mother a car so she get to work. And another great one is, there's a podcast, Custodial Care about the Koori Mail Flood Hub, and that has some really great insights for how we can care for communities through disaster.

Rachel Hay 51:12

And I think, a slightly different answers Dani's question, I think my answer to that of what the individual can do would be just start talking about care, and how important it is, and valuing, valuing it and the work, the care work that is done, and the care work that needs to be done to get us through hard times.

Amanda Kelly 51:34

Thanks, Rachel. And I was thinking, where on earth is she talking about in Victoria? And so thank you for those in the chat. It's Tarnagulla. Um, thank you. Now, this, you've actually sort of half answered this, Rachel - Simone Abbott mentioned that there's social media so much in social media that fragments communities. Do you have any recommendations for social media and how we might approach it in this space?

Rachel Hay 52:15

Yeah, it's a fraught space. From the research that we do, it can also be really powerful during disaster. So we heard of community members who posted online and said, "you know, I've got a spare bed, does anyone want it" when people had to evacuate. Or "I've got a paddock where you can bring your animals." So I think it's about taking that power back in social media. So creating a community, a local community Facebook group, where people can, you know, offer to help people during disasters, or taking it off our normal platforms and going to different platforms, I think it's called VE Cares that is in the region. And that sounds like a much more positive way to kind of make sure people are cared for through disaster.

Amanda Kelly 53:10

I think one of the things I've noticed is community notice boards is a fantastic place as well. So that's social, its media, you know, we could look old school.

Dr Millie Rooney 53:21

I think also adding to that, and this is not something any individual can do, but I kind of encouraged the bigger push collectively is, I don't know how many people here a big, you know, used to use Twitter a lot now called X. But you know, that was an amazing platform for connecting people, for people to get out information in the moment to their community, so you're not relying on you know, everything doesn't have to go to the ABC or the SES and then come back to you. It's getting out. But of course, that platform has obviously been bought out, and is very dysfunctional and very unsafe. It's a public square, it's a public good, are our ways of communicating with each other. So what would it look like if we had, you know, a public a digital public square that was community-owned, government-owned, that allowed us to connect like that, it would be another piece of disaster infrastructure that would benefit. You know, we deal with a whole lot of problems with democracy, you know, like it again, it's what are the solutions that aren't just focusing in on this moment of disaster, but change the whole context we operate in and just make it normal, that that's how we can connect and how we can connect well. So I think, again, if you're in a space that is thinking about disaster, keep pushing these things up as well while you're doing the immediate work, unfortunately, not to add to your workload, but we need to be doing both of these things.

Amanda Kelly 54:42

Yeah. Thank you. So I've got a question here from Matt. Thank you - he loves the presentation, that's great. What's the priority audience we need to reach at the moment is it at risk community engagement and education or broader public awareness of this conversation? Or are they both as important?

Rachel Hay 55:09

Yeah, I'd say they're both really important. I think government, in particular, has a lot of the power in this space still. And I think it is really important for them to start properly seeing communities. And yeah, taking that ethic of care and really running with it. I just wanted to mention, as well, I've seen some interest in the chat for, you know, collating resources and stories of, of communities. And I think that might be what we're doing the next phase of this project. So that's a little teaser for you there.

Amanda Kelly 55:49

Thank you. And I'm just aware of time, and I've got some really juicy questions in here. So one of them is around, from Header, who's talking about the role of local government. And, and does local accountability reforms have a role to play and just mashing them both together - Chris is talking about the full economic and social cost for floods and fires and disasters, and commenting it would be cheaper to redesign communities and move them into safe, sustainable spaces over time. So he's, they are looking at why not random regional or national or global competitions for future designs? So you know, this is that systemic thinking, I think, that we could think about. So just in the very final comments on those two questions? And I think we'll close the Q and A. So local government and their important, and also looking at what we might be able to do nationally.

Dr Millie Rooney 57:03

Thinking about the kind of design stuff about where our cities are and where they go. I mean, obviously, I'm not into competition. I think that is some hard questions we're going to have to ask about where are we repositioning physically in the landscape? And I would just say, anytime we do that, who are we displacing? And why, you know, who are we allowing to stay in place and building walls and private

armies to protect - which is happening in the US with the private firefighting service. And so how are we thinking about, how are we redesigning and reimagining our communities in ways that protect against all sorts of disruption? And in terms of local government, I didn't quite catch the question properly. But I think there's a role for every tier of government in this. And you know, there's some very immediate things around listening - you know, Rachel talked about being seen - we need to be listening to our communities, and we need to better work out, what's that interface between government and community, and state and local governments are obviously, much better positioned to do that. And so I think there's a role to experiment in those places. What if you really see your communities? And what do you have to do to make your communities feel seen? Not just you just thought you saw them? So yeah.

Amanda Kelly 58:24

Yeah, there's, there's a difference between hearing and listening. And, you know, how do we have, we've got to make sure that we are actually not only hearing the words, but we're listening deeply. And, and, and taking action. I can see the chat going off. I can, there's more questions. I'm really sorry. I want to respect people's time. So I am going to wrap it up now. But I'd be really, you know, I'd love to stay on for another couple of hours and keep chatting through this. So I want to say thank you so much. Thank you to Millie and Rachel, for your wonderful work on this project. And as Rachel said, the work hasn't finished. So we will be looking to take some next steps with this work. But in the meantime, I would really encourage you to read the reports. So we have an exec report and we have the deeper report which is just full of beautiful rich examples and some of those things you could take and run with now, basically, those are things that you could really look to. So, there's the reports to read. We also have a self-directed eLearning module - two and learning modules one which covers the executive summary, the other which covers more deeply and has some questions in there some thinking for you, and may help guide your thinking as well. So we'll pop that in the chat and there's a code there so that you can get into those for free. So, as I said, we, we have this work now we are going to continue to work on it but in itself a standalone document, it offers a guide on how to care and be cared for through disasters. So I would really encourage you to have a really deep read of it and share it with your colleagues. And if, as Millie said earlier, the offer is also there from me as well, if anyone, you know, Millie and Rachel obviously deeply worked on this, but we've worked on this together. So if anyone would like to brief their colleagues, talk to the community, please get in touch. We'll see what we can do. It's really important for this to be socialised and thought about. So, as I said, we're going into phase two. And so you'll be hearing from us again. And I just want to thank you so much for spending your time with us today. It's just been lovely to be here. I wish I could have seen all your faces, but could see all the wonderful comments in the chat. So thank you, everybody, and have a lovely rest of the day. Goodbye.

Rachel Hay 1:01:11

Thanks everyone.