



Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2017

Making Queensland the most disaster resilient state in Australia



Foreword



Message from the Deputy Premier

As Queenslanders, we know full well what it is to bear the brunt of Mother Nature and to be struck by disaster. We have risen above adversity time and time again following natural disasters, more recently the devastation of Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie. That says a great deal about our capacity for resilience.

We know that the impact of climate change means there will be more frequent and potentially devastating weather events to come. As such, our efforts to be more resilient must be dynamic. In Queensland, we need to continue building our resilience as we learn to respond, adapt and develop strategies to prepare for the next inevitable natural disaster.

That is why this government appointed Australia's only stand-alone, permanent agency, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, to oversee disaster recovery, mitigation and resilience policy and tasked it with delivering the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

The Strategy will capitalise on the good work already being delivered by our state agencies as well as local governments and communities and provide a cohesive approach to building resilience throughout the state.

Through the Strategy, the Queensland Government is committed to supporting local governments and working with them and their communities to identify resilience activities that will help safeguard their long-term wellbeing.

We will consult widely and we will listen to the unique perspectives of Queenslanders who understand better than anyone the challenges our diverse state delivers.

The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2017 gives focus to this government's commitment to make Queensland the most disaster resilient state in Australia.





Queensland is a large, diverse state with a unique mix of rural, regional, remote, urban and coastal communities. Each of these communities is faced with its own set of opportunities and challenges in a time of unprecedented change and uncertainty.

To thrive in such an environment it is essential that
Queenslanders are prepared and empowered to
adapt to circumstances as they change.

It is a well-known fact that Queensland's 4.9 million residents are regularly exposed to a range of hazards. These hazards, in conjunction with a warming climate, represent a significant threat to our ongoing safety and prosperity.

The tragic loss of life and devastating, long-lasting social and economic costs brought on by disasters over the last decade highlight the need for a fundamental shift in the way we deal with disasters and their impacts.

This shift away from merely coping with
disasters towards a culture of resilience
is already underway in Queensland.

We are learning that we all have a part to play in getting ready for the next inevitable disaster, and that small actions carried out ahead of time can improve the likelihood that our families, homes and businesses will bounce back from adversity.

A culture of resilience embodies more than just hardening our infrastructure. While the importance of structural mitigation and resilient design cannot be understated, it is the extent to which our communities have the capacity, skills and knowledge to adequately prepare, respond and adapt in the face of rapid change that will have the most lasting influence.

We are more aware than ever that the key to successful adaptation lies in our partnerships. Our efforts to reduce disaster risk are showing that initiatives are most effective when designed to tap into local networks and when tailored to meet the needs of distinct communities.

Our experience in dealing with frequent
natural disasters has already contributed
to the resilience of Queenslanders.

Through the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (the Strategy) the Queensland Government will harness the capabilities of its agencies, informed by the experience and knowledge of local governments, communities and individuals, to further build the state's capacity for resilience against all hazards.

Introduction

Queensland is the most disaster impacted state in Australia. Since 2010, Queensland has been impacted by more than 50 significant natural disaster events resulting in tragic loss of life and more than \$14 billion in damage to public infrastructure. Disasters have been shown to cause social costs equal to or greater than the physical costs. The impacts are felt immediately, and the trauma can endure for generations, profoundly affecting the fabric of our communities.

Our warming climate is already causing a shift in the frequency, distribution and intensity of weather events, with Queensland likely to be exposed to hotter summers, more intense rainfall, flooding, storms and cyclones. Disasters are expected to expose communities to previously unknown risks. This means greater emphasis on understanding the likely impacts, and preparing for them, will be integral to mitigating those risks.

Furthermore, we must also be conscious that disasters are not contained to natural hazards alone, but also encompass human initiated events that require a similar response to facilitate community resilience.

Although disasters cannot be prevented, we can take steps to better understand the risks associated with them and use that knowledge to implement targeted measures that effectively mitigate disaster-related impacts, safeguard communities, reduce recovery and reconstruction costs, lessen the likelihood of injury, death and damage, and speed up recovery.

Through the Strategy we are committed to the continued delivery of programs and initiatives that help to build safe, caring and connected communities, create jobs and a diverse economy and protect our precious natural environment.

The Strategy will drive the identification of opportunities and disaster risk management policy options to:

- build safe and connected communities
- support all Queenslanders, including those with vulnerabilities
- deliver resilient infrastructure
- stimulate economic growth
- ensure sustainable management of natural resources
- enable responsible development



Our stakeholders

Resilience is a shared responsibility and the Strategy's success will depend on the collective effort of individuals, communities, businesses, as well as governments. The following stakeholders are central to the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2017:

- Queensland communities and individuals
- Local Governments
- Queensland businesses and service providers
- State Government agencies
- The Australian Government
- Community-based organisations
- Non-government organisations



Resilience

Resilience is a term used in a variety of contexts and in a multitude of disciplines, including economics, psychology, climate science and agricultural studies.

In the context of disaster management, it is suitable to refer to resilience as:

A system or community's ability to rapidly accommodate and recover from the impacts of hazards, restore essential structures and desired functionality, and adapt to new circumstances.

State, national and international experience has shown that the following elements contribute to a resilient organisation or community:

- ▶▶▶ Risk-informed and appropriately prepared individuals
- ▶▶▶ The capacity to adapt
- ▶▶▶ Healthy levels of community connectedness, trust and cooperation

Current research in the field of resilience informs us that it is at the community level that the most powerful action can be taken to address disaster risk. Communities play an active and central role in disaster risk prevention and preparedness, and are the first to experience the rapid changes brought on by disasters that call for the adaptation required to survive and thrive.

Resilience should be realised as tangible improvements in the capacity and capability of a community to prepare, respond and recover from a disaster event. This includes the effectiveness of engagement and support of agencies, entities and individuals who serve the community within the context of Queensland's disaster management arrangements.

Critically, activities to improve levels of resilience to disaster rely on changing how we think and operate as part of our “business as usual”. Building resilience must be an ongoing process of learning, adjustment and adaptation that continues well beyond the phases of response and recovery. This shift is needed to guide implementation of risk reduction and to shape behavioural and cultural change across all stakeholders and sectors of the community.

Many of our communities have embraced opportunities for reducing disaster risk and building resilience before, during and after a disaster event. They have engaged with disaster risk reduction experts and have made significant, measurable progress.

Reflecting international research and experience, resilience needs to be embedded at all stages of the traditional disaster management cycle of Prevent, Prepare, Respond and Recover. The Strategy supports those dynamic processes as stakeholders engage in associated phases of ‘Anticipation’, ‘Response’ and ‘Adaptation’.





The Strategy provides an overarching framework to empower Queenslanders to factor in resilience measures and activities as they:

Anticipate

- ✓ assess risk exposure, vulnerability and capacity to cope
- ✓ strengthen alliances and networks and plan for continuity
- ✓ allocate resources ahead of disasters and take appropriate measures to reduce exposure
- ✓ incorporate current research and lived experience in planning for future disasters
- ✓ invest in structural and social measures to lessen the impact of disasters on individuals, homes, businesses, communities, assets and the environment

Respond

- ✓ mobilise strengthened alliances and networks for rapid and effective disaster response
- ✓ have the capacity, skills and knowledge to safely respond to and recover from a disaster and adjust response and recovery plans to rapidly changing circumstances

Adapt

- ✓ adapt to changed circumstances through reassessment, reorganisation and the application of learnings
- ✓ develop new courses of action and identify and introduce new resources
- ✓ acknowledge that we cannot eliminate all risk, and that ultimately we are all responsible for reducing exposure
- ✓ are empowered with information in order to make informed decisions regarding risk and consider alternatives when faced with changed circumstances





The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience

The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience is the guiding instrument through which we will realise our vision:

Making Queensland the most disaster resilient state in Australia.

The Strategy complements the existing disaster management arrangements in Queensland, as specified in the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (the Act). It should be read in conjunction with the *Queensland Disaster Management Strategic Policy Statement*, the *Queensland State Disaster Management Plan* and the *Emergency Management Assurance Framework*.

In accordance with the Act, our police, fire and emergency services and local governments are regularly required to call on their well-practised systems to safeguard our communities and expedite recovery when disaster strikes. The Strategy further supports the Act to drive the incorporation of disaster preparedness and risk reduction into daily government, business and community activities in Queensland.

The Strategy aligns with international and national reforms on disaster risk reduction, mitigation and resilience policy and actions.

The Strategy aligns with the principles of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (the Sendai Framework), the current global blueprint for managing disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Framework was adopted by United Nations Member States, including Australia, in March 2015. It aims to substantially reduce “disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries”.

The Strategy is consistent with the guidance provided in the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011)* and its seven priority actions to build resilience across the country.

The Strategy also aligns with requirements set out under the *Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) Determination 2017*, which requires all states and territories to demonstrate appropriate disaster mitigation strategies.

The Strategy acknowledges that the adverse effects of disasters are felt first and most significantly by people with vulnerabilities. Therefore implementation of the Strategy will be informed by *Queensland's People with vulnerabilities in disasters – A framework for an effective local response*, to ensure local governments and community partners are supported to reduce vulnerability, thereby increasing levels of community resilience.



The Strategy:

- sets the strategic direction for the realisation of the Queensland Government's vision to make Queensland the most disaster resilient state in Australia
- enables the harnessing of local, cultural and historical knowledge to deliver tailored strategies to embed an ongoing pursuit of resilience that will create stronger, safer, healthier and more secure communities
- encourages the development and strengthening of relationships across all levels of government and within communities to facilitate a coordinated and collaborative approach to building disaster resilience
- identifies the key components required to reduce disaster risk and build resilience across Queensland
- provides the framework to align disaster resilience activities with Queensland Government priorities, including the State Infrastructure Plan, the Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy and the Queensland Government's objectives for the community
- embraces the use of evidence-based and coordinated disaster risk reduction activities, aligned with international best practice



Guiding principles

The Strategy is guided by the following principles:

Shared responsibility

While governments have a primary role to play in addressing disaster risk, all Queenslanders share the challenge and responsibility for preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from the impacts of disasters. Many Queenslanders have a better understanding of their local disaster risks than anyone else, and are often best placed to identify and, with support, act on opportunities to reduce their vulnerability and exposure to hazards. Ultimately, increasing our resilience to disasters relies on Queenslanders working in partnership to develop their capacity to adapt to change.

An integrated risk-based approach

Building resilience to disasters is an increasingly complex challenge with effort required from a range of stakeholders, and there is a need for renewed collaboration between and across sectors and public agencies. We recognise that communities across Queensland are diverse in nature and require tailored solutions that reduce risk and build resilience. An integrated risk-based approach will ensure that initiatives are locally driven, and address the hazards and associated risks specific to that community.

Evidence-based decision making

Efforts to reduce and prevent disaster risk and build resilience are informed by recent and reliable data. Risk information is shared across sectors and communities to inform targeted risk reduction initiatives. Local knowledge represents a powerful store of evidence that will be incorporated into resilience initiatives. Importantly, the evidence is consistently used to deliver meaningful outcomes for Queensland communities and regions.

Continual learning

Building levels of community resilience is an ongoing process. We will continually seek to learn from our experiences and apply these learnings to improve our preparedness for future adversity. We consistently evaluate our efforts with the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. We will identify opportunities to promote the understanding of disaster risk and disaster resilience amongst students, professionals and the wider public.



Key Objectives

The success of the Strategy will be measured across the following Key Objectives and related Outcomes:

Queenslanders understand their disaster risk

Outcome: Queenslanders have access to up-to-date risk information, are better informed and better prepared for disasters.

Strengthened disaster risk management

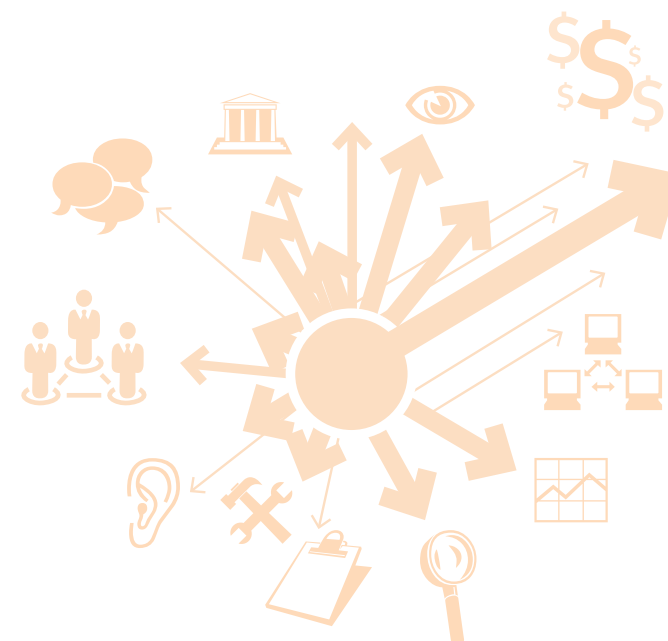
Outcome: The understanding and practice of disaster risk reduction is integrated within and across all sectors.

Queenslanders are invested in disaster risk reduction

Outcome: Queenslanders are engaged and invested in efforts to reduce exposure to disaster risk and build resilience.

There is continuous improvement in disaster preparedness, response and recovery

Outcome: Enhanced disaster preparedness for effective response, recovery and adaptation to changed environments.





Our commitment

Through the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience the Queensland Government commits to:

- Delivering more resilient infrastructure and transport systems
- Driving attitudinal, cultural and behavioural change across the state, enabling Queenslanders to anticipate, respond and adapt to disaster impacts
- Innovation in urban area design for living with the impacts of floods and droughts
- Promoting the incorporation of risk reduction in all planning and development
- Understanding the risks associated with a warming climate with improved coastal management
- Supporting the ability of our natural assets to serve as protective buffers against disaster impacts
- Furthering the understanding and management of natural landscapes to reduce the impacts and effects of floods and bushfires
- Building partnerships across community, industry, research organisations and government to improve the health of waterways and marine areas
- Identifying adaptation opportunities following disasters and in anticipation of climate change
- Providing opportunities for community-based solutions to the impacts of disasters
- Building greater business resilience and preparedness
- Increasing community awareness and preparedness for all hazards through community engagement
- Initiating research and evaluation projects to promote the positive trajectory of building resilience in Queensland
- The development and implementation of a strategic framework for flood risk management
- Driving continuous improvement in disaster management in Queensland via assurance frameworks and accompanying performance measures
- Minimising disaster impacts through flexible and adaptive planning







Delivery

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) is the lead agency responsible for disaster resilience policy and will work with all stakeholders, with a commitment to collaborative policy development for the implementation of the Strategy and the delivery of resilience initiatives.

A steering committee will be established with membership from all relevant state government agencies, the Local Government Association of Queensland and other stakeholders, to identify and promote initiatives that can be implemented under disaster resilience programs and coordinate available funding to address priorities.

The steering committee will oversee implementation of the Strategy, reporting to the Queensland Disaster Management Committee (QDMC) through a leadership board, comprised of the Chief Executives of key Queensland Government agencies. The QDMC is established under the Disaster Management Act 2003, and assumes the state-level role for the strategic direction of disaster management and decision-making.

Under section 30 of the Disaster Management Act 2003, Local Disaster Management Groups are responsible for ensuring that their communities are aware of ways of mitigating the adverse effects of an event, and preparing for, responding to and recovering from a disaster. The Queensland Government acknowledges that State agencies have a supporting role for Local Disaster Management Groups to better enable Queensland communities to understand and manage their exposure to disaster risk and implement local resilience building initiatives.

The successful delivery of effective resilience measures will be supported by input from the tertiary sector and national and international research bodies to ensure decision-making is informed by a solid evidence base.

Measuring success

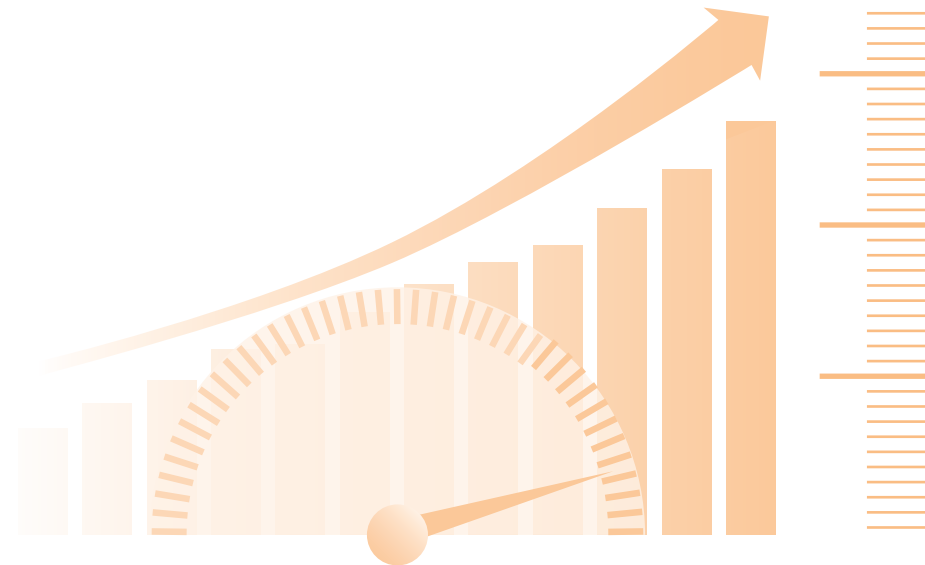
The QRA will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy and provide regular reporting to the responsible Minister, who will provide annual reports to Cabinet on progress against the Strategy.

Resilience will be measured at different levels across Queensland – at the state level and down to districts, towns, communities and individuals. A set of tailored indicators will be employed to measure progress made over time towards developing increased levels of resilience.

The indicators will be established via consultation with local governments and the Local Government Association of Queensland, community-based and non-government organisations, the private and tertiary sectors and our partner agencies, to ensure the unique characteristics of Queensland communities are taken into account when capturing successes and evaluating the effectiveness of resilience initiatives.

The indicators will support current, evidence-based decision making and the identification of opportunities to enhance preparedness, response and recovery from all hazard impacts. They will allow the benefits of proven initiatives to be measured, with learnings shared with all communities across the state.

The indicators will complement the work already carried out by the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management to empower Queensland communities to reduce local risk through application of the principles and shared responsibilities outlined in the Queensland Emergency Management Assurance Framework.





Stakeholder responsibilities

In accordance with the guiding principle of shared responsibility, all Queenslanders have a role to play in reducing our exposure and vulnerability to risk and to building resilience.

The **State Government** is responsible for:

- coordinating and executing disaster management arrangements in Queensland
- providing strategic direction and coordination of efforts to build resilience across all sectors of the community
- enabling access to up-to-date and reliable risk information
- ensuring all sectors of the community are aware of the options available for effective risk reduction.

Local governments are responsible for:

- leading local level disaster management arrangements through the effective operation of Local Disaster Management Groups
- building community understanding and capability to manage risks
- leading enhanced community resilience
- reducing exposure to all hazards through responsible land use planning, development and construction
- maintaining the natural environment to preserve natural buffers and critical ecosystems that contribute to resilience.

The **private sector, community organisations, service providers, government-owned corporations** and **non-government organisations** are responsible for:

- understanding their exposure to disaster risks
- preparing business continuity plans
- contributing to the social and economic recovery of affected communities
- considering the prevention and reduction of risk as part of their core activities.

Queensland **communities and individuals** are encouraged to:

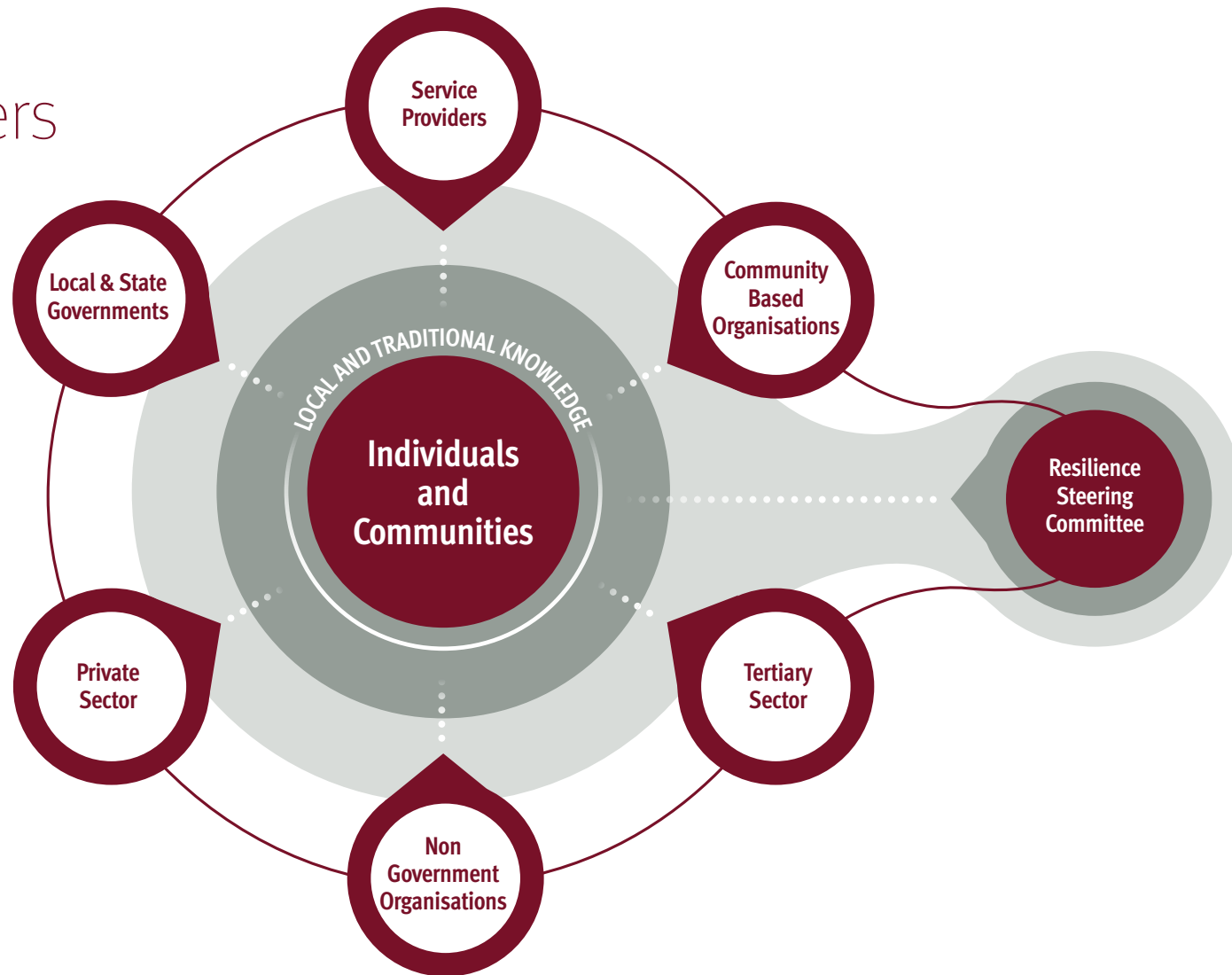
- build healthy levels of community connectedness, trust and cooperation
- understand their exposure to local risks
- carry out activities to plan and prepare for all hazards.

The **tertiary sector** should:

- work collaboratively with the public and private sectors to inform and develop risk reduction strategies based on emerging evidence.

Our partners

Strong, well-connected networks, together with a coordinated, collaborative approach to increase alignment of effort across the disaster management cycle, will provide a primed environment for disaster resilience initiatives to take effect.



Strategy review

The Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains aligned with national and international frameworks and reflects lessons learned from implemented initiatives across the state.



Implementation

Successful implementation of the Strategy begins with the understanding that a one size fits all approach to increasing levels of resilience will not be effective in Queensland. Actions and the subsequent evaluation of their effectiveness will be tailored to take into account the considerably diverse nature of our rural, regional, remote and urban communities on the coast and inland. Measures to increase resilience will be designed to address opportunities at the individual, local community, regional and state levels.

The Strategy will be implemented in conjunction with existing disaster management arrangements following a program of heavy consultation with representatives of all sectors. The Queensland Government will work with existing partnerships, and create new ones, to achieve its vision of building resilience.



Image courtesy of ADF



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