

Maintaining momentum at the 2024 Australian Disaster Resilience Conference

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Since the inception of the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference in 2018, communities have experienced an increased number of disaster events, often overlapping and cascading. These events highlight many areas of vulnerability for communities, landscapes, businesses and governments.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, bushfires, floods, cyclones and storms has been coupled with the pressures of increases in the cost of living. The Australian Disaster Resilience Conference confronted these issues and explored how to navigate this ‘new normal’ and prepare for the future.

The Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience hosted the 2024 Australian Disaster Resilience Conference in September in Sydney. This year, 600 delegates attended and attended presentations about ‘Maintaining momentum: driving systemic change to create a more resilient future’.

This year is the seventh anniversary of the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference. It was a milestone event and the biggest conference yet, with both the conference and professional development field trip sold out. The 2-day conference program featured 2 streams of presentations offering a comprehensive conference experience that delegates could tailor according to their interests as well as keynote speakers who presented topical and pressing issues relevant to the sector.

Dr Lori Moore-Merrell, Fire Administrator from FEMA, presented a keynote address on



The AIDR stand brought delegates together to talk about disaster risk reduction and resilience during ADRC24.
Image: AIDR

transformational leadership and innovation in a world of change. Douglas D'Antoine, Recovery Executive Officer from the Shire of Derby in West Kimberley, drew on best practice and his own experience in his discussion on Aboriginality and the Fitzroy Valley Flood Recovery Working Group.

Other keynote presentations included Dr Catriona Wallace, Adjunct Professor and Founder of Responsible Metaverse Alliancem, who discussed the how and why of responsible AI. Brendan Moon, Coordinator General of the National Emergency Management Agency, explored disruption as innovation and designing for risk in Australia.

This year's inspiring keynote speakers set the tone for each day's events and prompted delegates to consider the ways we can create change for a disaster resilient future. As the program continued, the exceptional work taking place across the country became evident through the passion and dedication of the presentations.

The panel discussion on masculinities, culture and disaster resilience was moderated by Dr Emma McNicol, Monash University, and featured John Richardson, AIDR Manager Knowledge Development and Bhiemie Williamson, Monash University, Steve O'Malley, Gender and Disaster Australia, Collin Sivalingum, Australian Red Cross, and Antony Ruru, Fire and Emergency New Zealand. The group discussed how culture influences perceptions of masculinity and how it then influences perceptions and responses to disaster.

On day 2, Anne Crestani, Resilient Villages Project, and Karen Cody and Cathrine MacNamara, ABCD Inc, discussed how resilience is built for the community by the community. This session provided insight into the Resilient Villages field trip to the Blue Mountains that took place the following day. Both their presentation and the field trip gave a unique insight and place-based example of the value and effectiveness of communities working together to strengthen readiness.

In the AFAC24 Exhibition on the Solutions Theatre stage, Dr Isabel Cornes, AIDR Senior Project Officer, introduced



The panel discussion explored 'Masculinities, culture and disaster resilience'.

Image: AIDR

the Planning for Animals Handbook (part of the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection) and the importance of considering animals during emergencies and disasters.

AIDR had a strong presence throughout the AFAC24 Exhibition with the return of Resilience Lane, sponsored by NRMA Insurance, the AIDR stand and the AIDR Knowledge Centre, which featured the popular poster. It was a highly active space with conference delegates discussing and sharing experiences, reading the posters and networking.

The 2024 Poster Award winners were announced in the closing ceremony. Congratulations to Shari Bent from Disaster Relief Australia for her winning poster 'Building community partnerships and connections with a big map'. Congratulations to the 2 highly commended posters, 'Safety in the game: sport as an effective channel of communication within all communities' by Elijah Chan, Fire and Rescue NSW, and 'Youth in Emergencies Development Program' by Ness Wiebford, Australian Red Cross.

The conference brought together a diverse and passionate crowd from a range of sectors and offered a unique experience to learn, share knowledge and collaborate through thought-provoking presentations, panel discussions, networking functions and AIDR's exhibition space.

The delegates and speakers shared their energy, ideas, commitment and support throughout the conference and this will maintain momentum for this important work. Thanks is extended to sponsors and partners for their significant contributions to the conference: NRMA Insurance, IAG Insurance, Fire to Flourish, NSW Reconstruction Authority, NEMA, Weatherzone and AFAC.

Proceedings of the 2024 Australian Disaster Resilience Conference are available at: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/australian-disaster-resilience-conference-2024-proceedings>.



Conference delegates gathered around the poster display in the AIDR Knowledge Centre.

Image: AIDR