

Community-led disaster resilience model benefiting those that need it most

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Credit: Vladyslav Dukhin from Pexels

A new report from Monash University's Fire to Flourish program has identified how a community-led approach to disaster resilience is delivering positive impacts for affected communities.

As climate disasters become more frequent and severe, it is crucial now more than ever to support local communities and individuals in enhancing their preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

The 2023 Impact Report from Fire to Flourish, which is part of the Monash Sustainable Development Institute, is based on a five-year collaborative program, aimed at advancing community-led disaster recovery and long-term resilience.

A community-led model recognizes that each community's strengths and priorities are different. Local people are best placed to identify their needs, and through flexible funding, capability building and diverse forms of support, Fire to Flourish enables communities to realize their disaster resilience goals over the long-term.

The report demonstrates the meaningful impacts the Fire to Flourish community-led approach is having on communities affected by the 2019/20 bushfires, and how a community-led approach can lead to measurable improvements in disaster resilience.

Professor Briony Rogers, Chief Executive Officer of Fire to Flourish, says the current approach to disaster resilience and recovery is failing communities, and innovation and experimentation is needed to develop new tools and knowledge that can better support communities preparing for and navigating the effects of disaster in the future.

"In a short period of time, the work of Fire to Flourish and our approach of partnering directly with [local communities](#) is demonstrating tangible progress in community disaster resilience and preparedness," Professor Rogers said.

"Our Impact Report clearly demonstrates that our community-led delivery model works and is benefiting the people that need it most."

The report uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence to demonstrate the social, economic, cultural, health, built and natural environmental benefits that have been felt in four partner communities, which include; Tenterfield, Eurobodalla, Clarence Valley and East Gippsland.

Helen Duroux, a Kamilaroi Elder and Fire to Flourish Tenterfield Community Lead, shares the unique experience of Indigenous communities in times of disaster.

"Our connection to Country means it affects us differently. In the weeks after the recent fires, my sister and I drove around and saw the devastation to the land. It was so hard for us to see Country the way it was. As Aboriginal people, when our Country is devastated, so are we," shared Ms. Duroux.

In response to another [fire](#) event in late 2023, the Tenterfield Fire to Flourish team mobilized swiftly and worked closely with the community to coordinate hands-on support, facilitate rapid response grants, share critical information and advocate on behalf of the community for local needs to be met by relevant agencies.

This community-led approach resulted in an elevation of community voices within interagency meetings and other important forums, helping transform local decision-making and enabling [community members](#) to feel an increased sense of agency and control in what was an uncertain and traumatic period.

"The set-up of the granting system was only effective because it was entrusted to local people with local knowledge to make the decisions. We are the ones on the ground who are connected with people and place and we know where the greatest needs are," said Ms. Duroux.

"The work and learnings of the Fire to Flourish program demonstrate a tangible pathway forward for advancing community-led disaster [resilience](#). This work fills a gap in Australia's current disaster management sector and we see real opportunity to share this work with other communities across Australia," added Professor Rogers.

To learn more about Fire to Flourish or take part in this initiative, see firetoflourish.monash.

Provided by Monash University

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