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Overview of the Webinar '*Are Climate Related Disasters Still 'Black Swans', or Have They Become Our New Normal?*'

Webinar held Tuesday 19th August 2025

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Webinar Overview



Image 1: Bushfires below Stacks Bluff, Tasmania
Photo by Matt Palmer on Unsplash

The idea that major disasters are rare "black swan" events is no longer supported by the data. Between 2019 and 2024, Australia recorded over 330 climate-related disasters, affecting LGAs a staggering 2,200 times over a 5-year period, with some LGAs experiencing up to 25 declared disasters. The time for a new approach is now.

The forum explored the following themes:

- The real cost of inaction on frequent disasters.
- Proven strategies for building resilience and adaptation.
- Innovative funding models to secure your community's future.
- Practical steps to reduce community and environmental harm.

Key Takeaways

- The current emphasis focuses on reactive disaster recovery spending as hazard events become more frequent and more severe.
- Dedicated funding for disaster risk reduction and resilience is over-subscribed.
- There is a need to 'plan for uncertainty', due to the unpredictable nature of climate related hazard events and their timing, duration, scale, location, and impact.

Key Takeaways – cont'd

- The current emphasis focuses on reactive disaster recovery spending as hazard events become more frequent and more severe.
- Dedicated funding for disaster risk reduction and resilience is over-subscribed.
- There is a need to 'plan for uncertainty', due to the unpredictable nature of climate related hazard events and their timing, duration, scale, location, and impact.
- It is important to recognise that there are opportunities to create new value from resilience investment and interventions, enhancing amenity during times of stability (e.g. green infrastructure, public spaces designed to be adaptable to times of stability and times of hazard).
- Understanding climate risk is a multi-disciplinary activity [for example, the University of Melbourne's Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety (<https://www.unimelb.edu.au/cdmpps>) supports 12 research units], with opportunities for detailed data-informed approaches to risk assessment and potential resilience activities.
- The Enabling Resilience Investment (ERI) framework (see <https://www.valueadvisory.co/resilience-disaster-risk-reduction>) provides an end-to-end data driven process across the full disaster risk reduction lifecycle to assess systemic risk and vulnerability, identify and prioritise adaptation options and pathways, and understand the funding sources and pathways for delivery
- A participatory approach (see <https://www.valueadvisory.co/resilience-disaster-risk-reduction>) empowers key stakeholders to highlight things of value, vulnerabilities, and identify place-based solutions that can build an evidence-base for more objective and informed investment decision making and unlock public and private funding pathways.



Figure 2: The Enabling Resilience Investment Framework

Wise R, Marinopoulos J, O'Connell D, Mesic N, Tieman G, Gorddard R, Chan J, Flett D, Lee A, Box P, Meharg, S and Helfgott A (2022) Enabling Resilience Investment Guidance version 1. CSIRO and Value Advisory Partners, Australia.

Key Questions

- Focus on urban design and mitigation strategies is important but what about the impacts for rural and remote communities?
- What time horizon(s) do you use to model/forecast climate events, impacts and consequences?
- Have you found Australia has had challenges in developing environmental solutions in comparison to other cities around the world simply due to our vast land area and contrasting environmental conditions compared to those smaller and often land-locked countries?
- Does the ERI framework assess a community's capability and access to opportunities for value creation? If so, how?
- Have you engaged with State Government agencies on this work to support coordinated policy translation and support place-based activities (and minimise siloed approach)?
- What is the first step you think Councils should take to improve adaptation outcomes?
- Where does nature-based resilience fit within that jigsaw?
- For Defence perspective, we still having high risk season readiness during the summer to support the whole government disaster responses. Do you believe readiness period should be rethinking by Defence?
- A challenge for councils is funding these projects. Where do we find these types of funds?

Further Observations

- Planning for disaster preparedness appears to rest largely on anticipating such events and the accuracy of forecast. A reliable Met service is needed to ensure timely planning. On the other hand, as much as technical and technological knowledge is crucial, the pivotal role of citizen science and stakeholder consultation in co-designing adaptation measures is undeniable.
- At the end of the day, we are managing risk which includes climate related risks. As a society we have established governance arrangements to mitigate risk, i.e. land use planning, public health, asset management, transport systems, finance, natural resources, etc. These governance arrangements include legislation, guidelines, standards and clear roles, responsibilities and accountability. However, climate adaptation responses are not considered in the same way. Currently, local government has the most significant role in responding to these risks, however, they are challenged as the responses are 'climate-shifted' to them however, there is an absence in coordination, support and systems. It is not good enough to say that each council, their community and environment are unique - there needs to be a coordinated and strategic program to support adaptation that is led and funded by Aust and State Govt. With no clear head of power, climate responses (and investment) will be discretionary and not part of corporate decision making
- Coordinated and clear leadership at State and Commonwealth levels are needed to enable climate risk actions to be taken up in a meaningful way. In short, we need legislation and accredited programs rather than relying on councils' projects to pilot trial and invest.

Helpful Links

- [CSIRO - Enabling Resilience Investment Framework](#)
- [CDMPS - published news on webinar hosted](#)
- [LinkedIn post by John Marinopoulos - Value Advisory Partners](#)

Acknowledgements



Strategies for enhancing resilience and adaptation

Sally Kuschel

Assistant Coordinator-General, Strategy and Resilience Policy
National Emergency Management Agency, Commonwealth Government



Discussing consistency of coastal disaster related impacts across Australia and new spatial data in Australia

Prof. Alexander Babanin

Director, Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety, The University of Melbourne



A/Prof. Jagannath Aryal

Dept of Infrastructure Engineering, The University of Melbourne



Reflecting on global climate impacts on major cities

Sally Capp AO

Vice-Chancellor's Fellow, The University of Melbourne
Former Lord Mayor of the City of Melbourne



Discussing new approaches to local resilience funding and financing and presenting a new database of Australian climate disaster events

John Marinopoulos

Partner, Value Advisory Partners



Peter Heinmiller

Principal, Value Advisory Partners