



Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors During Natural Disasters Forum Report



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Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors During Natural Disasters Forum Report

1. Introduction

The **Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors from Natural Disasters Forum** was held at the Pavilion Function Centre, Albion on 18 August 2014 as part of Queensland **Seniors Week**.

At present in Queensland there are no clear state-wide strategies in place that provide vulnerable seniors with the necessary support required to prepare for a disaster, survive the event and then restore life to some level of normality afterwards. COTA Queensland organised this forum to bring key stakeholders together to discuss whether there is scope for improvement in supporting vulnerable seniors during natural disasters, and if so, to identify what approaches might best achieve this.

Ergon Energy provided sponsorship for the event which enabled the forum registration fee to be kept at a reasonable level and demonstrates Ergon Energy's commitment to community safety.

The 81 forum participants were drawn from Local Government, Queensland Government agencies with a role in disaster management, NGOs that provide aged care and disaster support services, Residential Aged Care providers and peak organisations. A full list of organisations that attended is at Attachment 1.

COTA Queensland was assisted in planning the forum by a working group comprised of:

Sarah Baker - COTA Queensland

Jo Beadle - Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience

Bruce Connell- Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience

Ayla Curtis - Department of Fire and Emergency Services

Lisa Lennon- Brisbane City Council

Sheree McMonigle - Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Norah Pearson - Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Collin Sivalingum- Australian Red Cross

John Stalker - COTA Queensland

The forum was facilitated by Brooke Winters, Regional Executive Director – South West Region, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland and Songwoman Maroochy, a Songwoman and Law-woman of the Turrbal People, performed the 'Welcome to Country' ceremony. The Honourable Tracy Davis MP, Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services opened the forum and launched Seniors Week 2014. Mark Tucker-Evans, Chief Executive of COTA Queensland welcomed participants to the forum and thanked Ergon Energy for its sponsorship. At the end of the day, Peter Howells, Chair of the COTA Queensland Board, made the closing remarks. The full forum program is at Attachment 2.

The day consisted of 7 presentations on a variety of Disaster Management topics relevant to safeguarding seniors, a table workshop session where participants were asked to consider the following question:

- Is what we are currently doing to manage vulnerable seniors during natural disasters adequate?
 - If not, what needs to change?
 - How do we undertake that change?
 - Where can we start?

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Each table was also randomly assigned one of the following questions for discussion:

- How do we translate identified requirements after an event into preparedness techniques that can reduce that need afterwards?
- How do we support the supporters?
 - How do we get organisations like Seniors Helpline the information to provide to the people they support?
 - How do we keep this information up to date?
- How do you identify and support the most vulnerable people in your community?
- How do you support and engage with communities that have specific and unique cultural needs?
- How do you mentally prepare seniors for disasters?
- How do we better provide care in Situ instead of potentially causing more problems through evacuation and displacement?

Participants were also invited to submit questions for the Panel Discussion which followed the table discussions.



Figure 1: Peter Howells, COTA Qld Chair; The Honourable Tracy Davis, Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and Mark Tucker-Evans, Chief Executive COTA Qld

The forum presenters were:

- *Jason Cameron* – Manager, Disaster Management Office, Brisbane City Council
- *Phil Carney* – Director, Community Recovery Branch, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- *Carmel Flynn* – Director, Health and Human Services Emergency Management, Victorian Government
- *Catherine Girman* – Planning and Educational Officer, Emergency Management Section, Townsville City Council
- *Steve Leighton* – General Manager, Customer Delivery, Ergon Energy
- *Collin Sivalingum* – Regional Co-ordinator, Australian Red Cross
- *Bridget Tehan* – Senior Policy Analyst, Emergency Management, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)

All forum presentations are available online at www.cotaqld.org.au/achieving_change

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Figure 2- Speakers: Steve Leighton, Bridget Tehan, Phil Carney, Carmel Flynn, Collin Sivalingum and Catherine Girman (Left to Right) Jason Cameron – not available for photo.

Members of the forum discussion panel were:

- *Julie Argeros* - Service Coordinator, Time for Grandparents and Seniors Enquiry Line, UnitingCare Community
- *Michael Dickinson* - Senior Advisor, Disaster Management, Local Government Association of Queensland
- *Iain McKenzie* - Inspector-General Emergency Management
- *John Stalker* - Program Coordinator, Seniors Peak Service, COTA Queensland
- *Bridget Tehan* - Senior Policy Analyst, Emergency Management, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)
- *Brooke Winters* - Regional Executive Director- South West Region, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services



Figure 3-Panel Members: Bridget Tehan, Brooke Winters, Michael Dickinson, Iain McKenzie, Julie Argeros and John Stalker (Left to Right)

2. Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors in Context

The number of seniors resident in Queensland is expected to increase substantially over the coming decade. The 2013 Office of Economic and Statistical Research (OESR) published population projections that estimate a growth in persons 60 years of age or above within Queensland from 825,170 in 2011 to 1,171,792 in 2021 (**Queensland Government, 2013**). This represents a growth of 346,622 seniors (42 per cent) with the 60 year and over total population share increasing from 18.4 per cent to 21.4 per cent.

The people captured by the term "seniors" are heterogeneous in respect to any increased vulnerabilities they may face in the event of a natural disaster. Many seniors are fully able to take all-necessary measures to prepare for, survive and recover from a disaster event; this includes many seniors actively assisting in various capacities to help others in a time of need. However, the age cohort that has suffered the largest number of fatalities and severe injuries during recent natural disasters has been the senior age bracket.

Vulnerability should not be solely defined on the level of risk exposure to physical injury. The Yale Centre for Preparedness defines vulnerable seniors as: *"People... (over 60 years of age)... who cannot comfortably or safely access and use the standard resources offered in disaster preparedness, relief and recovery. They may include people with sensory impairments (blind, deaf, hard-of-hearing); cognitive disorders; mobility limitations; limited English comprehension or non-English speaking; as well as people who are geographically or culturally isolated, medically or chemically dependent, or homeless."* **Yale Centre (2012)**

Vulnerable seniors are those seniors who are particularly at risk of not surviving the disaster impact and/or experiencing poor physical, psychological, or social health after a disaster if they survive. Vulnerable seniors have need for extra support over that offered to the non-vulnerable before, during, and after a disaster incident, in functional areas, including but not limited to: maintaining independence, communication, housing, transportation, supervision and medical care.

The "vulnerability" perspective in disasters, which is rapidly emerging as a dominant view in the field, assumes that a real disaster occurs when it strikes an underprivileged population. Vulnerability is formally defined as "the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influences their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard." Implicit here is "differential vulnerability"; that is, different populations face different levels of risk and vulnerability. Consequently, policies aimed at addressing risk and vulnerability must also take into account these differential impacts and outcomes of disasters. Although the sources of vulnerability are multiple and quite diverse, some of the most important factors that affect vulnerability include population growth and distribution and social diversity. **Donner (2011)**

In supporting seniors through a disaster, it is vital to understand the barriers they may face in preparing for the event. This may be something as simple as not being able to afford to stock up on the basics such as medical supplies, food and water. Seniors with hearing, vision or behavioural impairments may not receive or understand warnings about an impending disaster event. There is a high need to link seniors' pre-event preparation, reaction during events, and post-event behaviours.

Greenberg (2014) outlines in Table 1 the range of impacts that seniors could potentially experience because of a disaster.

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Public Health	Economic Losses
Immediate Death	Loss of housing and other assets
Life-shortening exposures	Loss of access to work and ability to pay bills
Acute Illness	Severe property damage
Severe disability	Severe devaluation of property
Temporary disability	Reduced appreciation of property values
Minor and temporary illness	Cost of Cleanup and maintenance
Emotional illness and stress, loss of self-esteem, security and sense of place	
Infrastructure and Service Losses	Social Losses
Gasoline	Loss of health care services
Water and sewer	Loss of personal friends
Communications	Loss of educational / social opportunities
Loss of food supply	Disruption of existing community
Loss of medication	Distributional impacts on disadvantaged groups

Source: Adapted and modified from Greenberg and Anderson (1984)

Table 1 - Potential Impacts of Hazard Events on Seniors

3. Forum Presentations

A brief summary of each presentation is provided below; the full versions are available at <http://www.cotaqlld.org.au>.

Bridget Tehan, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS): **Disaster and disadvantage: Social vulnerability in emergency management.**

Bridget's presentation was based on the VCOSS report *Disaster and disadvantage: Social vulnerability in emergency management*. The presentation underlined the fact that many seniors are severely impacted upon by disasters due to the increased vulnerabilities they may face. These vulnerabilities can include physical health problems, economic disadvantage, mental health issues and housing. Bridget then offered suggestions for how planning for older people in emergencies could be improved.

Jason Cameron, Brisbane City Council: **The Brisbane Incident Management System & Disaster Management Capabilities.**

Jason provided a detailed presentation on the Brisbane Incident Management System and Disaster Management Capabilities. The five guiding principles of disaster management were outlined, along with the Queensland disaster management structure. Jason then explained in detail the Brisbane Incident Management System.

Catherine Girman, Townsville City Council: **Protecting Seniors Against Natural Disasters Case Study: Townsville, Queensland.**

Catherine outlined the structure and operations of the Townsville Local Disaster Management Group and its interaction with other key organisations in the community. Cyclone Yasi was then used as a case study to demonstrate how the preparation, response and recovery processes worked in Townsville. Catherine then detailed the key lessons to emerge from Cyclone Yasi, which included: improved messaging to the community, year round engagement and increased

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engagement with community groups and carer/support organisations.

Carmel Flynn, Health and Human Services Emergency Management Victoria: **Older People in Emergencies – A statewide, integrated planning approach.**

With reference to personal experience of recovery and resilience around the 1974 Brisbane floods, Carmel outlined the processes that led to the establishment of Vulnerable Persons Registers in Victoria. The scope of the Vulnerable People in Emergencies Policy was explained in respect to which at which groups were covered. The operations of the Vulnerable Persons Registers and the responsibilities of the various organisations involved were also covered. Lastly, Carmel explained how the register assisted in locating vulnerable persons during the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire.

Steve Leighton, Ergon Energy: **Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors During Natural Disasters**

Steve in his presentation detailed the approach undertaken by Ergon to ensure that customers are fully aware of what to do in the lead up to the storm and cyclone season to be prepared. The communication strategy also advises customers how to respond to a loss of power and what the process is for its restoration. The Life Support Program was detailed, including how individuals with health issues can become members of the program.

Phil Carney, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services: **How Can we Help.**

Phil outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Department as the lead agency for human and social recovery under the Disaster Management Act 2003. The Department works closely with service and community organisations in responding to emergencies. Phil addressed work that has already been done to improve the recovery and assistance processes in Queensland and identified several areas where further improvement could be made.

Collin Sivalingum, Australian Red Cross: **Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors During Natural Disasters.**

A comprehensive presentation on the evacuation processes used by Red Cross to assist those displaced during disaster, including vulnerable seniors. Collin spoke about standards for evacuation centres including processes, planning for the unexpected, optimal layout and staffing arrangements. Red Cross also seeks to reunite those separated during disaster. The Red Cross Telecross and Telechat programs were also explained.

4. Table Workshop Findings

Each table addressed a common question and then tables were provided a second question to consider. The common question set was:

What are we currently doing to manage vulnerable seniors during natural disasters? Is it adequate? If not, how do we change? How do we undertake the change and where can we start?

The consensus reached by all tables was that there is room for improvement in respect to existing measures that are in place to safeguard seniors during a natural disaster. In addition, the measures that do exist are ad-hoc in nature and lack coordination. The quality of support offered to seniors also varied considerably across regions. The disaster management framework in place in Queensland is sound; however, the framework does have some response gaps in respect to special needs groups. Delegates recognised that overall at the state and regional levels the responsible government

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agencies and community service organisations undertake good work in respect to disaster preparedness and response. Equally, the Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) play an effective role in coordinating local preparation and response activities.

The provision of assistance to vulnerable seniors, however, is not always considered as a core emergency response business item during a crisis and may not feature in local disaster risk plans. NGOs and other community groups will often have to fill the gap and assist vulnerable groups. The success and quality of this assistance is dependent upon the effectiveness of any local working relationships and networks that exist.

4.1 What do we need to change?

There was strong interest in the Victorian *Vulnerable Persons Register* which was seen to offer a range of benefits. However, it was also recognised that it would require a broad range of issues to be addressed if a similar approach was considered in Queensland. These issues included the scope of such a registry, what definition of vulnerability would be used to manage entry, information privacy, information currency and agreement between agencies on information sharing. It should be noted that Iain McKenzie, Inspector-General Emergency Management, advised the forum that the Office of the Inspector General Emergency Management was currently investigating the confidentiality/privacy implications around information sharing in Queensland. It was also suggested that if a register was established it could be designed to link in with the existing “Triple Zero” emergency call system.

Concern was also expressed on the over reliance on technology to communicate in the lead-up to and during and after a disaster event. It was stated that during a disaster power is usually lost early in the event (subject to its severity); often the telephone lines also go down which results in the loss of the internet. In respect to vulnerable seniors some would not have direct access to the internet in any case. To address this it is important to ensure that the target group has the necessary information and equipment (emergency kit with a wind-up radio or battery radio) in advance.

The role of local government in preparing and responding to a disaster situation is relatively well understood within the community. However, what are unclear are the roles and responsibilities of the numerous other organisations within communities that either currently play a role or could play a role during an emergency. Who the organisations are and what they could do should be identified and clearly mapped out. It was also noted that at times those in local government felt isolated in developing and implementing local strategies. There is often disconnect between the disaster teams and the human services teams within councils. This then can also adversely impact on involvement and relationships with service providers and community groups.

4.2 How do we undertake the change?

Many in attendance supported the establishment of either a register arrangement or other model to enable information on the degree/ type of vulnerability and location of vulnerable seniors able to be accessed during the lead-up to a disaster situation. Some Forum participants expressed strong interest in the Victorian model, which provides consent-based registration of vulnerable individuals through a service provider; while other participants favoured establishing a networked arrangement that could utilise information held on client databases, managed by service providers. An identified risk of the second option would be if the funded organisation that held vulnerable client information ceased to operate. Procedures would be required to enable the transfer of vulnerable senior information to another agency in this situation.

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There is a clear need for increased staff education in organisations providing assistance as well as to community members on how best to assist vulnerable seniors. Valuable resources and information already exist on government and NGO websites (e.g. Australian Red Cross RediPlans and “Get Ready Queensland” campaign materials). The location and importance of this information, for seniors to prepare for weather events and other emergencies, needs to be better communicated. At-risk seniors who are living independently and who do not access home, community or health support services would be difficult to capture in any register of the vulnerable that was to be developed. The forum was advised that it would be uncommon to find formalised disaster plans in place within independent or smaller aged care facilities. Therefore, there is a need to educate providers on what is required to better safeguard residents including ensuring that disaster management plans be considered a core component of business continuity plans.

A suggestion was made that government should fund a project where representatives from disaster management agencies (including local government) could educate various community service organisations to work “one on one” with the elderly and vulnerable people to provide education and promote disaster preparedness.

Underpinning all of these actions is a need to more effectively assist those who are socially isolated and lack family and community support networks (these would include homeless seniors). Information could be distributed at the community level utilising all available resources; for example, churches often have extensive community level networks. Communication avenues could include Centrelink, energy utilities, rates notices, pharmacies, libraries; service clubs e.g. Lions, RSLs and other clubs. Communication strategies should also tap into seniors as a resource – talk to them in the preparation stage to ascertain their expectations, and develop appropriate mechanisms to utilise their experience and knowledge to develop workable solutions. This could also involve recruiting seniors as Peer Educators to help spread disaster preparedness information.

Across all regions, there is a need to work more collaboratively and to review local disaster management group processes and protocols and communicate these more widely. There is a need to review and strengthen coordinated responses to potential situations by connecting with identified groups and organisations within communities. Government emergency management agencies at all levels need to become more active in fostering this involvement and provide the mentoring that these organisations need to effectively plan their responses to natural disaster and to develop local collaboration to support these responses.

Forums of stakeholders were considered invaluable for information sharing, generating improved response and support strategies as well as building networks and improved working relationships. One local authority representative stated that on returning home discussions would commence with local seniors to ask them how they wanted to be involved and assisted. Forums could also be held with local service providers to start the process of better pooling community resources together.

Service providers should also raise the issue of emergency response with their clients. At the time of entry to the service and at review points, client disaster response plans could be discussed. The information collected would be held on the client file and where the client has provided consent released to authorities in the event of an emergency. It was also suggested that when people are issued with a Senior’s Card they could also be provided with an information pack on safeguarding oneself during a disaster. An appointment could also be offered to discuss strategies on surviving a disaster situation and assistance provided to develop a personal Disaster Response Plan.

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The development of a *client risk rating system* was also proposed. The risk rating would enable clients to be assigned a rating that reflects their degree of vulnerability. The information would follow the client if they moved to a new provider. The system would have to be universal across the various health and community support service providers and could be shared using available mechanisms such as e-health records.

It was stated that Local Governments often do not fully understand the non-tangible aspect of recovery. Social recovery gets the least amount of funding and this aspect urgently requires funding consideration. The disaster management framework should be amended to ensure that equal consideration is given to human and social service needs as to roads and other infrastructure.

4.3 How do we better provide care in situ instead of potentially causing more problems through evacuation and displacement?

Community education to raise awareness that the prime responsibility rests with the individual for their own well-being is one of the key preparation messages that needs to be communicated to the wider population. However vulnerable populations affected by ill health, frailty, economic disadvantage or cognitive impairment will always require assistance from someone to prepare for and manage through a natural disaster event.

Strong relationships between Residential Aged Care Facilities and the local disaster management group is essential to ensure both parties remain up-to-date in regard to the likely impact of the weather/fire event and aware of any issues at the care facility. As stated earlier, pre-planning is essential, as RACFs cannot plan on last-minute assistance when emergency response resources are at a premium.

With extreme frailty and multiple health problems being common features of the vulnerable senior population, evacuation and displacement from familiar surroundings can cause problems in addition to the stresses experienced by the general population during a natural disaster. In most cases, evacuation to a distant locale should be a last resort. Disaster management planning is essential for Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF), to reduce the potential for evacuation due to manageable situations such as loss of power, running water and cut-off of supplies.

The care of residents is the responsibility of the Facility Management, this disaster contingency planning needs to give consideration to strategies that will ensure that adequate supplies and provisions, including consumables, will be on-hand to cover being isolated or unable to receive deliveries. Auxiliary power facilities would also be required to maintain water, food, power and lighting and medical services.

Aged Care Facilities should be encouraged to develop local sharing arrangements with other providers that could be implemented if local evacuation of the facility is required. The agreements need to be in place before a disaster situation occurs to enable client transfers and other arrangements to be trialled. Clear and readily accessible information about the care requirements of all residents must be available in the event of evacuation. Organisational Disaster planning should incorporate strategies to record client capacity and options if they should not remain in place during a disaster event. Aged care facilities at one time used to take in people at risk during a disaster event. Aged care providers that are prepared to take in senior residents from other facilities or from

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the general community during an emergency should be considered for eligibility for government disaster assistance.

Home-based vulnerable seniors may require support in determining whether they have the capacity to stay at home and to assist them in developing a disaster plan. Organisations could prepare emergency kits for vulnerable clients who may not be able to prepare their own, whilst making them aware in advance that essential services only, for example nursing, may be provided to maintain client health during the disaster and immediate recovery period

4.4 How do we mentally prepare seniors for disaster?

Most seniors have had prior experience of natural disaster events, this experience can equip them with the knowledge of what to expect in the way of disruption to daily living. However, seniors may over-estimate their ability to cope without assistance based on this prior experience that may have occurred many years before when they were younger, fitter and stronger.

An extensive year round community education program, which builds upon current “seasonal” campaigns, should be developed and be promoted on all forms of media in order to make people *aware but not afraid*. Awareness events, as well as, culturally specific events, can be used to distribute resources and information and to empower seniors to be proactive. Communications should encourage one-on-one conversations with seniors where possible and encourage family members and extended family to discuss plans with older family members. It might be an option to recruit seniors to become Disaster Resilience Educators within their communities. It is essential to ensure that all education programs, information and educators also meet the needs of CALD and communities.

Individual contingency planning should include the identification of care needs and how those needs could be met. Information kits would be of help and assist in having conversations about contingency planning. Community groups could facilitate the distribution of information within the community. Other options include:

- Include emergency preparedness information in rates notices, power and phone bills.
- Utilise community free newspapers to provide and update information regularly.
- Providers of Government funded services such as HACC and other home service organisations could also be utilised to provide information on visits to people at home

Dissemination of information in rural and remote areas is complicated by factors such as distance and isolation and these issues need to be addressed in the development of communication strategies.

4.5 How do we support the supporters?

Organisations that support vulnerable populations through natural disasters in turn require resources, knowledge and importantly, support to provide support.

It is important that staffs of these organisations are well-informed about local Disaster Management Plans and are well versed in having conversations with people about what to expect, how to respond, available resources and assistance.

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Local Disaster Management Groups need to provide information to these supporters about what services are both practical and available to clients and facilitate the development of working relationships between services. This will facilitate the identification and referral of traumatised individuals to appropriate supports during and after an emergency.

It is important to ensure that people undertaking support roles have access to accredited training and are fully aware of any legal requirements. Team members should be encouraged to attend network meetings. If informal carers require respite support in order to participate, such support should be made available in addition to their regular respite entitlements.

4.6 How do we translate identified requirements after an event into preparation techniques that can reduce the need afterwards?

As is already the case for Local Disaster Management Groups, conducting a post-disaster review can reveal significant learning, which in turn contributes to improved disaster management processes. The review should include debriefing staff, residents and organisations to identify opportunities for improvement. Workshops and a report on key findings will help share the information and contribute to further improvements. Reports should identify what worked well and what needs improvement and how those improvements might be achieved.

There is the need to acknowledge that every disaster is different and that in each natural disaster, even those of the same type, there will always be something unexpected and unanticipated.

Undertaking simulation exercises in the quiet times to practice changes implemented through the review process can ensure that all stakeholders are ready to respond, as well as identifying any additional issues that should be addressed. The involvement of all relevant groups at the regional level to discuss and review the district disaster plan on a regular basis will ensure that the region is as prepared as possible and that plans are in place and widely known. Observations from recent disasters and discussions at this forum would suggest that district disaster plans should make specific note of how the needs of vulnerable groups will be managed.

5. Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors in other Countries

This section has been included given the high level of interest in the registration of vulnerable seniors expressed at the forum. A snapshot is provided of the approaches used in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Japan to register vulnerable seniors. In addition, it also outlines a European Union project that was launched early this year to address the needs of vulnerable seniors.

United Kingdom

The document that guides the approach to safeguarding vulnerable citizens during disasters within the United Kingdom is *Identifying People Who Are Vulnerable in a Crisis: Guidance for Emergency Planners and Responders* that was published by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat in 2008. This document makes it clear that: *It would be impossible to maintain a central up-to-date list of*

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vulnerable people. Therefore it is recommended that lists of organisations and establishments are made, who can then be contacted in the event of an emergency to provide relevant information.

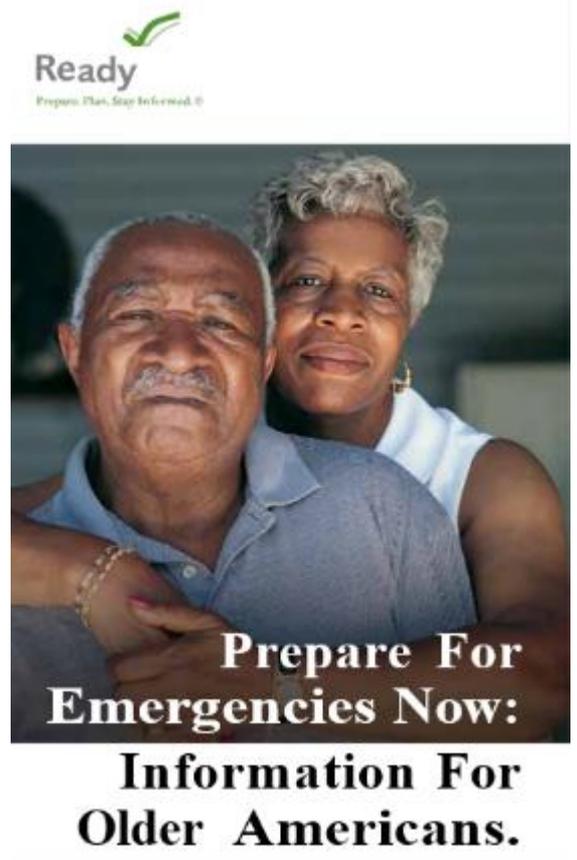
To achieve this there is a four-part strategy – build networks of list holders; creating lists of lists; agree data sharing protocols and activation triggers; and determine the potential scale of requirements to support the vulnerable during a disaster from the data obtained from the lists.

The document states: *These lists will not be a central list of individuals but a list of partners and contact numbers that can be used to gather relevant information in the event of an emergency. This approach might include:*

- *List of organisations (likely to be your key planning partners) who hold and maintain the key vulnerable people data, with an agreement to provide it in the event of an emergency. This approach helps avoid some data sharing difficulties (see section on data sharing protocols).*
- *List of types of vulnerability - identifying the potential range of vulnerable people with specific needs within a local area in advance of an emergency will assist with planning and response.*
- *List of vulnerable establishments in your area - identifying the key establishments likely to require additional assistance in terms of vulnerable people. Again, your planning partners are likely to hold this information. Cabinet Office (2008)*

United States of America

At the Federal level in the United States the Federal Emergency Management Agency runs the *Ready* program which seeks to make citizens more aware and prepared for disasters. This includes a specific information program aimed at seniors which includes the brochure *Prepare for Emergencies Now: Information for Older Americans*. The brochure advises that: *Some local emergency management offices maintain registers of older people so they can be located and assisted quickly in a disaster. Contact your local emergency management agency to see if these services exist where you live.* The development and maintenance of vulnerable registers is the discretionary responsibility of state governments and local governments if they choose to establish one.



http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/olderamericans_quadfold.pdf

A state level example of a vulnerable persons register is the *State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEAR)*. Within Texas, registries exist at both the state and local government levels. The following is an extract from the registry website:

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Do you or anyone you know need some assistance during times of an emergency event? The state of Texas presents the STEAR program. The STEAR program is a free registry that provides local emergency planners and emergency responders with additional information on the needs in their community. Texas communities use the registry information in different ways. Registering yourself in the STEAR registry DOES NOT guarantee that you will receive a specific service during an emergency. Available services will vary by community. For more information on how your community will use information in the STEAR registry, contact your local emergency management office.

Who Should Register?

People with Disabilities

People with access and functional needs such as:

People who have limited mobility

People who have communication barriers

People who require additional medical assistance during an emergency event

People who require transportation assistance

People who require personal care assistance

... <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/stear/public.htm>

The following website extract is a county level example from Colorado:

The Douglas County Special Needs Registry is a database containing information about individuals in Douglas County with special needs who may require assistance in the event of a disaster. The information may also be used to assist emergency personnel and volunteers in providing assistance. Participation in the Special Needs Registry is voluntary.

Our department's mission is to assess and plan for hazards and emergencies and work with other public safety and municipal agencies to ensure public welfare. As a pre-planning tool, the Special Needs Registry should be considered for all people who have special medical needs (i.e. oxygen or life support systems that are dependent upon electrical power) or have physical disabilities that would make it difficult to independently follow public safety directions, such as evacuation, if the need arose.

<https://apps.douglas.co.us/apps/emr/initIndex.do>

The United States Centre for Disease Control has identified the following four approaches to identifying vulnerable seniors who may require assistance during an emergency:

- Characterizing the population: Basic epidemiologic data can be used to guide planning for the delivery of services, medications, durable medical equipment, and other materials needed to support older adults during all phases of an emergency.*
- Using geographic information systems (GIS): GIS mapping technology allows officials to coordinate information about the locations of vulnerable older adult populations, community*

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resources to help older adults, and potential hazards. Understanding where older adults are located and how they might be adversely affected by different types of emergencies can help local planners and first responders prepare for how they will meet the needs of older adults during an emergency.

- *Building, maintaining, and using registries: Registries can be developed to provide information about specific types of help—such as medical equipment, transportation, or evacuation assistance—that vulnerable older adults will need during an emergency. They also can serve the broader purpose of identifying older adults who might need any type of help in an emergency.*
- *Using shelter intake procedures to identify vulnerable older adults in the community: This information can be used to identify older adults who may need special help.* **Centre for Disease Control (2013)**

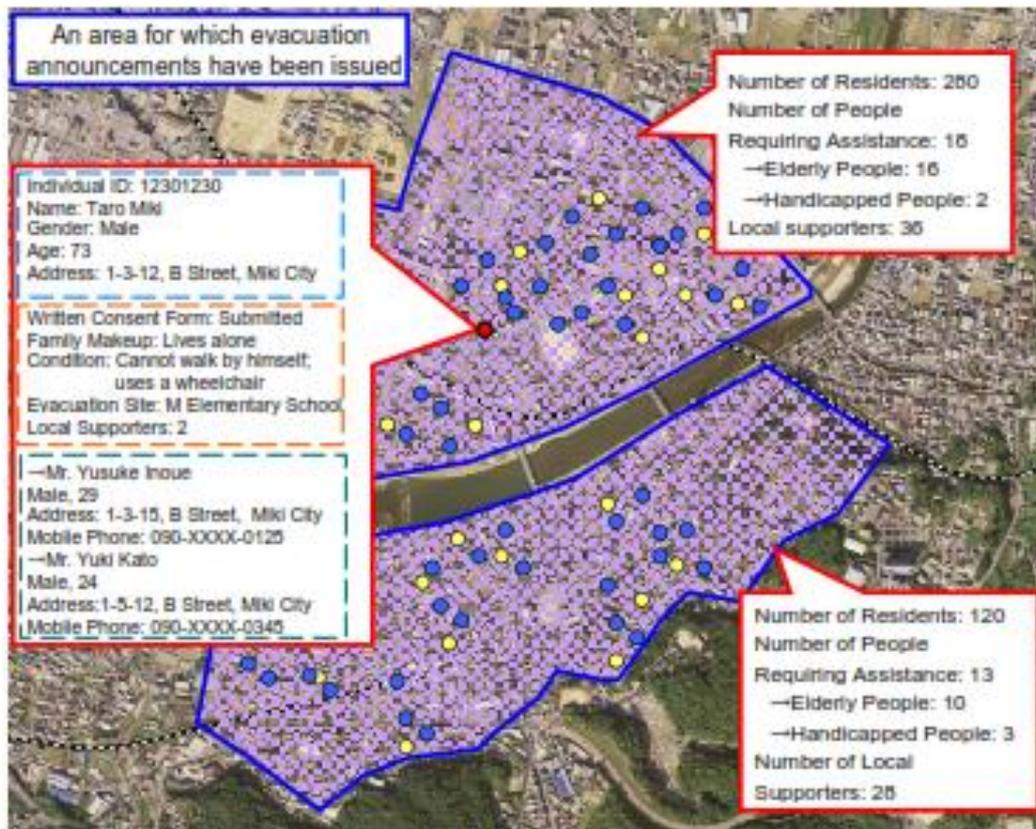
Japan

In 2006, the Japanese Government requested local governments to identify residents at risk and arrange support plans for each vulnerable resident as specified in the document *Guidelines for Evacuation Support of People Requiring Assistance During a Disaster*. This was supported by the Government's model of "Self-Help", "Mutual-Help" and "Public-Help". ... *the basic ideas of disaster management should legally stipulate the philosophy and the roles of "self-help", where people and enterprise protect their own lives and assets; "mutual-help", where people of the community, enterprises, volunteers, relatives organizations and others collaborate to protect the safety of the region, and "public-help" by the central and local governments.* **Arima (a)**

In January, 2014 the Central Disaster Prevention Council, which is chaired by the Prime Minister, made the decision to mandate the collection by local governments from April 2014 of all required data on vulnerable people which will include the information on the type of disability, names, addresses and contact numbers. The Fire and Disaster Management Agency had determined that as at April 2013 less than 30 per cent of local governments had collected this data. **Japan Times (2014)**

Below is an example, from a prototype developed for Miki City, of the type of vulnerable person information that will be available.

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Source: Arima (2009) Development of GIS-Based Information Systems for People Vulnerable to Disaster.

The European Union

The Council of the European Union agreed upon a set of Council conclusions in December, 2013 in regard to *Mass Evacuation in Case of Disasters in the European Union*, **Council of The European Union (2013)**. These conclusions seek to achieve a more consistent and coordinated approach to mass evacuation across member states. Mass evacuation is explained in Conclusion 3 below:

...Acknowledging that evacuation represents a civil protection measure encompassing the movement of population in an organised way, before, during or after a disaster, from the affected areas, or areas that may be potentially affected, and includes the reception of evacuees in areas that can provide protection and survival conditions;

Conclusion 12 (b) invites Member States to:

... integrate relevant aspects of mass evacuation, and the reception and return of evacuees, into all phases of the disaster management cycle, particularly in the preparedness phase, ensuring that the different needs of specific groups (for instance: children, people with disabilities, elderly people, non-native speakers, non-residents and/or tourists) are considered. This integrated approach should encompass all levels - local, regional and national, and, where appropriate, include the necessary international arrangements;

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The European Union has also funded a group of international partners led by the Austrian Red Cross to undertake a two-year project titled PrepAGE. The project, which commenced early in 2014 will produce:

- Policy recommendations relevant to each partner country and general recommendations relevant to EU member States, including good practice examples on assisting older people.
- Guidelines for Emergency and Disaster Management organisations on how to incorporate the needs of (frail) older people into preparedness plans.
- Adapting existing organisational emergency and disaster management procedures to include preparedness measures for older people
- Development of prototype information material to be used by local stakeholders. **Strumpel (2013)**

6. Conclusion

COTA Queensland organised this forum in response to the numerous concerns expressed by stakeholders in both the emergency services, community services and government sectors that not enough is being done to safeguard seniors during natural disasters. These concerns were strongly supported by forum delegates and in response, a range of measures was proposed by forum attendees to improve upon the current arrangements in place to safeguard seniors. In expressing these concerns, however, delegates recognised that overall at the state and regional levels the responsible government agencies and community service organisations undertake good work in respect to disaster preparedness and response. Equally, the Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) play an effective role in coordinating local preparation and response activities.

However, all relevant agencies are urged to consider how the measures suggested at the forum, in respect to not only vulnerable seniors but all vulnerable groups, could be adopted and implemented. The adoption of many of the ideas expressed at the forum will contribute to the development of an even more resilient and responsive disaster management system in Queensland. Queenslanders will be better equipped to manage their own safety if they are able; and more effective and coordinated assistance will be available to those in a vulnerable situation.

COTA Queensland will continue to advocate for the rights and needs of older Queenslanders and will use this report to that end. COTA Queensland hopes that this report will generate discussion at a local and state level about the networks and responses that will work best for each community and support organisations that work with and have a duty of care to vulnerable seniors.

COTA Queensland is hosting the International Federation on Aging, 13th Global Conference, **Readiness, Resilience, Recovery – Disasters in an Ageing World** in Brisbane 21-24 June 2016. It is hoped that Queensland's approach to supporting vulnerable seniors during disasters will be able to be showcased at this global conference as a world best approach.

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Attachment 1: Organisations that attended forum

Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA) Australia Ltd
Anglicare Southern Queensland
Australian Hearing
Australian Red Cross
Blue Care
Brisbane City Council
Bundaberg Regional Council
Carinity
Centacare
City of Gold Coast
COTA Queensland
Department of Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services
Department of Housing and Public Works
Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience
Flexi Care Inc.
Footprints
Inspector-General Emergency Management
Ipswich City Council
IUIH
Jubilee Community Care
Kalwun
LASA Q
Legacy Brisbane
Local Government Association Queensland
Logan City Council
Mercy Community Services - Aged Care
Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local
Milford Grange RSL Care
Moreton Bay Regional Council
Noosa Day Respite Centre
Ozcare
Prescare
Qld Fire & Emergency Services
Qld Meals on Wheels
Quality Care Consulting
Queensland Ambulance Service
Redland City Council
RSL Care
Southern Downs Regional Council
St John Ambulance (Qld)
Sunshine Coast Medicare Local
Townsville City Council
TransitCare
UnitingCare Community
Victorian Council of Social Services

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Victorian Government- Health and Human Services Management

Volunteering Queensland

Wesley Mission Brisbane

Wide Bay Medicare Local

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Attachment 2

Event Program	
Seniors Week 16 -24 August 2014 : Safeguarding Vulnerable Seniors During Natural Disasters – 18 August 2014	
Aim:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using past disaster events, identify the specific challenges encountered when dealing with vulnerable seniors at times of natural disaster • To identify what strategies could be implemented to anticipate and manage these challenges 	
For the purpose of this forum vulnerable seniors are those unable to evacuate without assistance.	
7:45 – 8:15	Registration
8:15 – 8:20	Today's Program & Housekeeping : Facilitator – Brooke Winters , Regional Executive Director, South-West Region, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
8:20 –8:30	Welcome to Country Songwoman Maroochy
8:30 – 8:35	Welcome by Mark Tucker-Evans , Chief Executive, COTA Queensland
8:35 – 9:00	Opening of Seniors Week and Forum by The Honourable Tracy Davis MP, Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
9:00 - 9:30	Bridget Tehan Senior Policy Analyst-Emergency Management Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS).
9:30 – 10:00	Jason Cameron Manager, Disaster Management Office Brisbane City Council
10:00 – 10:30	Catherine Girman Planning and Educational Officer, Emergency Management Section Townsville City Council
10:30 – 10:45	Morning Tea
10:45 – 11:15	Carmel Flynn Director, Health and Human Services Emergency Management Victorian Government
11:15 – 11:45	Steve Leighton, General Manager, Customer Delivery Ergon Energy
11:45 – 12:15	Phil Carney Director

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	Community Recovery Branch Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
12:15 – 12:45	Collin Sivalingum Regional Co-ordinator Australian Red Cross
12:45 – 1:15	Lunch Break
1:15- 3:30	Table Workshops: Brooke Winters (Facilitator) Each table will be presented with a number of questions which are designed to generate discussion around the issues and possible solutions. Questions will also be prepared at the tables to ask the Panel. The information from the workshop and panel sessions will be collected and discussed during the Feedback & Closing Session. Panel Discussion: Panel: Brooke Winters (Chair), Iain McKenzie, Inspector General (Office of the Inspector General Emergency Management), Michael Dickinson (Local Government Association Queensland), Julie Argeros (Uniting Care Community), John Stalker (COTA Queensland)
3:30 – 3:45	Afternoon Tea
3:45 –4:15	Feedback & Summary Session Brooke Winters
4:15 – 4:30	Closing Statement: Peter Howells - Chair, COTA Queensland

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