



GET READY NARRABRI SHIRE CITIZENS' JURIES

A NARRABRI SHIRE CITIZENS' JURY ON DISASTER RESPONSE

The Get Ready Narrabri Shire project was delivered as a partnership between the NSW State Emergency Service, the University of Adelaide and the University of New England. The project was funded through the NSW Office of Emergency Management and NSW Department of Justice, as part of its Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP). The pilot project used a deliberative democratic approach with two Citizens' Juries (one adult, one youth) to engage with the citizens of Narrabri Shire. Jury members were engaged about the issue of emergency management and to work towards promoting the concept of shared responsibility and resilience to natural hazards such as floods, storms and bushfires.

It was anticipated that this project could build community capacity through improved knowledge and understanding by the Narrabri Shire community, its youth and key stakeholders, of their risk of natural disasters and suitable mitigation strategies. Furthermore, while the suite of recommendations developed by the Jury may be specific to the Narrabri Shire, it was likely that they would be relevant to communities in other settings.

THE ISSUE

The number of natural disasters occurring is on the rise and, while loss of life is in decline, the number of people affected by disasters is increasing. Empowering communities to be disaster resilient is being recognised as a strategy to address this problem. Resilience in managing disasters is a shared responsibility for all of society. The Get Ready Narrabri Shire Citizens' Juries project aimed to identify how the community, businesses, Government and non-Government organisations and emergency service organisations can work together to reduce the impact and cost of a natural disaster in the Narrabri Shire.

OUR APPROACH

The Adult Jury was convened over a weekend, Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th September 2017. A Jury program was developed that presented evidence on emergency management, natural hazard risks, community perspectives, decision-making, thinking under stress and how to prepare for and respond to a natural disaster. The Youth Jury was conducted in partnership with Wee Waa High School and was an abridged version of the Adult Jury focusing on floods as the natural disaster. It was held on Friday 15th September at the school with 18 students from Year 7-10 participating in the activity.

The witnesses for the juries were sourced from a range of local, regional and state experts from a range of organisations including Bureau of Meteorology, Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Police, North West Local Land Service and Narrabri Shire Council. The 17 jurors were community members from the Narrabri Shire and included residents from the main town of Narrabri, smaller satellite towns and those who lived on properties.

Funded under the joint State and Commonwealth Natural Disaster Resilience Program

ADULT JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Get Ready Narrabri citizens' jury supported both community and emergency services' approaches for preparing communities in the Narrabri area for a bushfire or flood emergency. The Jury advocated a multi-faceted approach recognising that the community can contribute to the effective management of disasters and that community appropriate plans are a component of community preparedness.

The Jury formed the following 16 recommendations listed in order of priority:

1. Have a comprehensive information communication plan involving all services working together (workshops, slogans, skill development, community meetings) (17)
2. Have a community emergency expo event (17)
3. Have local community wardens and committees to plan and advise with locals and liaise with emergency services (16)
4. Make mental health services funded and available after an event (12)
5. Use radio, TV, social media and information boards to provide directions to people (11)
6. Vets to give talks about animal preparedness (11)
7. Prepare community-wide emergency response plans with churches and volunteer organisation (10)
8. Help others including neighbours to have an evacuation plan (10)
9. Fire services to door knock to check water preparedness (10)
10. Provide resources and agency- help people to prepare properties (9)
11. Conduct an "are you okay" campaign (RUOK) after a natural disaster (9)
12. Use local identifiable people to provide information (8)
13. Supermarkets and councils work together to make emergency packs available (7)
14. Provide an info pack with contacts for recovery activities (6)
15. Letter drop an example of an emergency plan (5)
16. Help people to get other peoples' contacts (5)

YOUTH JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wee Waa High School youth jury provided eight recommendations for actions that young people could take to prepare for an emergency event. The jury focused on floods as a specific emergency event:

1. Prepare your pets (26)
2. Make a plan with your family (17)
3. Have a stockpile of food and supplies prepared in advance of an emergency (14)
4. Prepare a bag with special personal items (14)
5. Know how to contact the emergency services (8)
6. In a flood obey direction from the SES (4)
7. Know what to do if a flood happens (dangers, where to go) (4)
8. Talk with neighbours and your community about how to prepare for an emergency (3)

NOTE: The number in the brackets indicates the number of votes each recommendation was awarded

IMPLICATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS IN NSW

The ideas of deliberative democracy and community ownership of disaster resilience are natural companions. The strength of the Get Ready Narrabri Citizens' Juries is its self-emerged views of how communities perceive emergency management in their district and the actions they believe will improve the ways that residents and emergency services can work better together in floods, storms and bushfires.

The Juries recommendations, while not dissimilar from general principles and approaches to community engagement in NSW, show the importance of communication, information and coordination about hazards. Importantly though, what the juries also showed was the community desire to know more about the emergency management system, what they can (and can't) expect to happen and how the community can become more involved in disaster planning and preparedness in encouraging individual and community-level actions.

The success of the Get Ready Narrabri Citizens' Juries in hearing the views of the community provides evidence that it would be a useful component of disaster resilience programs in other areas of NSW. The recommendations of a Citizens' Jury provides a forum to extract meaningful input from communities, that have broad community approval and acceptance. Some of these recommendations may lie outside the strategies, capacities or resources of traditional emergency management approaches.

The Narrabri Citizens' Juries invested in hearing from residents and young people in the Narrabri Shire about what they can do, as a community, to enhance their disaster resilience. This is an important, but often under-appreciated, first step in community ownership and leadership of disaster resilience under a shared responsibility platform. Furthermore, young people are often overlooked as key players in effective emergency management. The Juries recommended many options about how communities, businesses, council and emergency service agencies could work better together to keep people safe in emergencies in Narrabri Shire. These recommendations range across all hazards, preparation, response and recovery and communities, households, businesses and governments. The NSW Government Get Ready Program aims to build resilience at the community level and to embed community ownership of resilience programs. A Citizens' Jury is an effective first step to work with communities to achieve this aim.

Funded under the joint State and Commonwealth Natural Disaster Resilience Program