Background

The costs of disasters borne by society is rising, with increasing disasters, greater urbanization, and a greater value of what is at risk. Formed in 2012, the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safer Communities is a collaboration of businesses and the Australian Red Cross working to make Australian communities safer and more resilient to natural disasters.

The Roundtable members are the Chief Executive Officers of the Australian Red Cross, IAG, Investa Office, Munich Re, Optus (Chairman) and Westpac.

The cornerstone of this work is to influence public policy via evidence-based reporting on the unsustainable cost of disasters on life, property and the economy. Each member organization of the Roundtable plays a crucial role in community planning or disaster recovery and all have supported customers and communities affected by floods, storms and bushfires.

Australian Red Cross accepted the invitation to join the Roundtable to ensure that the humanitarian dimension was represented in this work, as well as providing insights into how emergency management operated in the Australian context.

The Roundtable has commissioned numerous reports since its inception, most recently:

- The economic cost of the social impact of natural disasters, March 2016
- Building resilience to natural disasters in our states and territories, November 2017

The Roundtable members are jointly committing resources to work constructively with governments to deliver in five critical areas; community education, risk information, adaptation research, mitigation infrastructure and strategic alliances.
What did the action seek to change?
Shifting the national investment in disaster funding from recovery and response costs, to greater funding in preparedness and mitigation.

What were the key actions taken to achieve this change?
Identify the scope of the issue (i.e. the costs), determine solutions and run cost benefit analyses to demonstrate the savings that can be made.

What were the essential steps taken along the process to bring about this change?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Formation of the roundtable, at a senior level, with significant reach into the Australian community.</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Commissioning of research.</td>
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<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Development and implementation of a communications and advocacy strategy.</td>
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What SFDRR principles were applicable to this change process?

Principle 1 Shared responsibility between central Government and national authorities, sectors and stakeholders as appropriate to national circumstances.

Principle 2 Decision-making to be inclusive and risk-informed while using a multi-hazard approach.

What were the Achievements and the Impacts?

Through high level and public advocacy by the roundtable members, we have seen the announcement of the Productivity Commission’s inquiry in Disaster Funding, which recommended changes to the way disasters are funded, including increased investment in disaster risk reduction. The reports produced by the Roundtable have also been drawn upon by State governments to inform strategies such as the Queensland Disaster Resilience Strategy and the Victorian government’s Resilient Recovery Project.

The Federal government has also commenced the development of a National Disaster Mitigation Framework, which will prioritize areas of high risk, examine how to better share data to enable risk informed decision-making, and determine best ways to more effectively fund mitigation activities.

Most recently, the Government of Australian has announced the formation of the National Resilience Taskforce, which is charged with the development of a five-year National Disaster Mitigation Framework. Australian Red Cross will provide input into this framework, through its membership of the Roundtable, and independently.

1 e.g. Primary responsibility of the State, Shared responsibility, Protection, All-of-society-engagement, coordination mechanism, empowering local-decision makers, Multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision-making, Sustainable development, Local and specific risks.
What were the key Lessons Learnt?

- Ensure that there is executive level commitment to objectives of the roundtable, and this is supported by programme expertise.
- Ensure that consultants engaged are well versed in the nuances of the disaster resilience issues.

What were the Good Practices arising from this action?

**Good Practice 1**
Engagement of the Roundtable members at the highest level, supported by experienced content experts. Having the CEOs of the various organizations at the table and taking personal interest in the issues and driving the outcomes, meant that the work had significant internal impetus. In addition, having the CEOs, many of whom were public figures, also lent credibility to the endeavour and enabled access to the Australian government at a senior level, through the relevant Minister, and the Director General Emergency Management Australia. Having experienced content experts, in emergency management and sustainability, enabled the roundtable to be well informed of relevant issues, and the current state of the policy environment.

**Good Practice 2**
Engagement of a respected economics research firm to quickly distil the issues and report. Deloitte Access Economics has strong reputation within Australian government policy circles to deliver quality reports on diverse topics. DAE showed an excellent grasp of the complexity of the issues, particularly those on social impacts. They were able to quickly research and distil the issues, and working closely with Red Cross content experts, to shape a compelling narrative that has gained significant traction within the emergency management policy space. The benefit of using such consultants was the speed at which they worked, providing a quality report, which maintained momentum in advocating for increased investment in disaster resilience.

Policy Relevance to DRR in Action

This case study contributes to Priority 3, investing in disaster risk reduction, through demonstrating Red Cross engagement with the private sector as a thought leader in the area of disaster risk reduction.

**Key Messages from this Case Study**

- Roundtable members bring diversity of perspectives to a common goal of making communities safer and more resilient to natural disasters – this creates a stronger voice in advocating evidence-based action.
- Evidence-based policy making is important and the Roundtable model engages respected economists to quickly distil the issues and report.
- It is in the long term interests of government, not-for-profit and the corporate sector to work together to build national resilience to disasters.
- We need to embed resilience across all aspects of policy and decision-making.
- We need to prioritize resilience investments by considering the broader economic and social benefits that result from the efforts.
The Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities is an excellent demonstration of engaging leaders in the corporate sector and making them champions for disaster risk reduction.

**References for this Case Study**


- *Building our Nation’s Resilience to Natural Disasters*, 2013
- *Building Resilient Infrastructure*, 2016
- *Building the resilience of our nation in states and territories*, 2017

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