



Get Ready for Flood Community Housing Sector Project (Hawkesbury Nepean Valley)

**Action research insights Briefing Paper
Evaluation and impact**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



INNER SYDNEY VOICE
regional social development council



The Get Ready for Flood Social Housing Sector Project was a joint initiative by Inner Sydney Voice and Infrastructure NSW, and was funded under the Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Risk Management Strategy. The University of Sydney was the Project Research Partner co-ordinating Participatory Action Research throughout. The Project utilised a sector capacity building approach and was implemented in two stages.

During Stage 1, a Disaster Resilience Network was formed to map key issues facing social housing tenants in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Floodplain, bringing major stakeholders including community housing providers, local government, emergency management agencies, local community services organisations, government and social housing tenants. Gaps in disaster preparedness in relation to social housing tenants and strategies to build tenant and sector support and resilience capacity were identified.

Stage 2 of the Project enacted strategies from Stage 1 including training and development in disaster preparedness with community housing providers, local community service providers and tenants. Flood preparedness information in the form of a flyer was developed collaboratively with tenants. In Stage 2 a number of opportunities for ongoing network and capacity development amongst stakeholders were identified as part of long-term flood preparedness for vulnerable populations in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Floodplain.

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) process which ran throughout the Project provided real time data to Project Leaders and stakeholders as the Project progressed. This meant that refinement, based on research evidence could be undertaken to ensure learning was translated immediately into project design and implementation. Use of PAR in this Project ensured quick and practical feedback loops for each activity and for Project objectives overall. This supported a process of adaptation and responsiveness throughout.

Project processes and outcomes are reported in a series of Briefing Papers focused on different aspects and stakeholder groups. This Briefing Paper is one of a set which cover all key elements of Project design, implementation and outcomes.

This paper details the 14 action research cycles completed during the life of the project. The table below illustrates the process of action, reflection and refinement which was the focus for each cycle. You can see the relationships between cycles and how learning was incorporated into the next cycle based on data collected and analysed in the previous cycle.

This briefing paper should be read alongside the one on Methods. It provides a close grain view of the Action Research process and how it worked in an integrated way with the Project overall.

Cycle Focus	Action	Reflection/Refinement/Planning
Cycle 1 Engagement and Scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project briefing with key stakeholders • Initial planning with ISV and Infrastructure NSW • Research interviews with stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on establishing network and engaging all stakeholders • Tenant engagement • Making space for tenants' voices – separate and joint meetings
Cycle 2 Network Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network meetings • Project Worker meetings with Stakeholders • Terms of Reference and focus negotiated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing different roles of network members • Ongoing relationship building with stakeholders • Balancing different narratives – tenant experience, flood data, scale of flood risk.

Cycle Focus	Action	Reflection/Refinement/Planning
Cycle 3 Network as Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task focused workshops at Network meetings (development of flyer, communication with all social housing tenants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on information provision to tenants Size of the Network challenging for task focused work. How to more actively engage central stakeholders? Differences between strategic, response and operational roles of members lead to discussion of roles and project focus.
Cycle 4 Role Clarification	<p>Network meetings focused on role of CHPs and Department of Communities and Justice</p> <p>Project worker meetings with key CHP, policy and government representatives to clarify project engagement, roles and action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical role of CHPs emerges from discussions. Emergency management focus outside current scope of CHPs. Resource limitations and need for linking and co-ordination between CHPs, EM agencies and others at all stages of disaster cycle emerges as central challenge.
Cycle 5 - Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network meeting to scope sustainability and future planning for social housing disaster preparedness. Project Outcomes assessed Stage 1 Research Report submitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement of importance and urgency of work Need to clarify ongoing responsibilities for disaster preparedness in relation to social housing. Gaps identified in co-ordination, resourcing and planning regarding vulnerable populations such as those living in social housing.
Stage 2 Cycle 6 – Reshaping the Network and Drivers	<p>Stage 2 Project planning</p> <p>New ISV Project Worker</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning from Stage 1 reviewed Reshape Network focus from task to strategic guidance orientation in Stage 2 Need to focus on specific locations most impacted by flood emerges as priority Importance of CHPs as key implementation partners in Stage 2

Cycle Focus	Action	Reflection/Refinement/Planning
Cycle 7 – Place based work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of flood risk using flood mapping data. • Planning to focus project work in geographic areas of high risk. • COVID-19 Restrictions introduced during this period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan scope and engagement with specific communities most at flood risk. • Discussion with Council regarding engagement with specific communities • Ongoing communication with CHPs. • Importance of long term community development identifies but outside project scope
Cycle 8 – COVID Conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 restrictions impact on project activities and community engagement • Opportunity discussed to collect data from key stakeholders during real time disaster (COVID) • Stakeholders invited to participate in Zoom focus group to share current experiences and reflect on disaster impacts. • Focus groups held with three organisations – follow up focus groups with two organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of options for project pause or adapted activities due to COVID-19. Project continued with focus on understanding how local organisations working with social housing tenants adapt during a crisis. • Local community organisations adapted quickly and with limited resources. • COVID created increased opportunities for direct connection/support with clients • Reflections on previous disasters revealed high workload but no inclusion of community organisations in formal disaster management.
Cycle 9 – Engaging CHPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New strategy developed to connect CHPs to project – training workshops discussed to support staff working with tenants on disaster preparedness. • Training program developed and piloted by SES, Infrastructure NSW and ISV workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHPs welcome training workshops and become more engaged in project. • Practical and focused frame of workshops provides outcomes for both individual participants and CHPs. • Initial workshops focus on information provision and knowledge building regarding flood risk and response.

Cycle Focus	Action	Reflection/Refinement/Planning
<p>Cycle 10 – Training as Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training workshops refined to include increased participant interaction. • Both CHPs and other stakeholder organisations invited to participate in workshops. • Pre and post survey included as part of training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High workload and resource pressures created barriers for CHP engagement. Offer of training workshops enabled increased engagement. • Offer of practical and focused product (workshops) provided needed support to organisations and a framework for action on future tenant disaster preparedness.
<p>Cycle 11 – Training Design and Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training workshops completed with CHPs (workers and team leaders), community organisation staff and volunteers. • Workshops undertaken online and via hybrid delivery (presenters online and in room with participants in the room) due to COVID restrictions. • Ongoing refinement of workshops to support more active learning and practical implementation. • Workshop follow up and support offered by ISV and NSW SES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As workshops rolled out, feedback and reflection in action research team discussions enabled refinement in focus and amount of information provided as well as introduction of interactive elements designed for specific audiences. E.g. local residents who were also workers or volunteers. • Hybrid workshop delivery created challenges in rapport building and participant discussion, however, COVID restrictions were key shapers of workshop delivery modes. • Potential of workshops to be first engagement with participants, followed up by more targeted support and information.

Cycle Focus	Action	Reflection/Refinement/Planning
Cycle 12 – Training Design and Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop undertaken with social housing tenants. • Workshop undertaken with government agency. • Follow up focus group with CHPs re feedback and workshop implementation • Community Resilience Network meeting. • Training participant interviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the tenant workshop was well received, numbers were small and the need for broader engagement with tenants was highlighted. • Online workshop with government agency highlighted the importance of future work in engaging with agencies on disaster resilience building. • Resilience Network meeting participants reflected on the importance and success of the project in linking key stakeholders and starting the process of building disaster resilience capacity to support social housing tenants.
Cycle 13 – Strategic Directions and Future Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research team meetings. • Final stakeholder interviews • Project review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action research yielded significant data for a range of key stakeholders. • Impact of Hawkesbury flood event provided further evidence to inform ongoing planning.
Cycle 14 – Consolidation and Final Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of briefing papers outlining research findings and recommendations. • Presentation of results to Infrastructure NSW, ISV, NSWSES and other key stakeholders 	