

# Foundations in Indigenous disaster resilience



## RESEARCH TEAM

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Project duration: 2 years

## SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

## Background

In Australia, researchers have found that Indigenous people are more likely to be impacted by environmental disasters. Despite this growing challenge, there is a lack of research examining the experiences of Indigenous people – individuals, families, communities, and Traditional Owners – during times of major disasters. National Indigenous Disaster Resilience (NIDR) seeks to investigate the experiences of Indigenous people and communities before, during and after major disasters through the project, ‘Foundations in Indigenous Disaster Resilience’ (Foundations Project). The Foundations Project has been developed in response to growing recognition of the disproportionate impacts that natural hazards, including bushfires, floods, cyclones, heatwaves, rising oceans, and more are having on Indigenous people, and the lack of inclusion of Indigenous people across the policies and frameworks that determine practice in the emergency management sector.

## Project description

This project aims to create an ecosystem of authoritative knowledge and practical guidance to better support Indigenous people and communities to strengthen their resilience, while creating lasting change in the structures, institutions, and processes of emergency management and disaster resilience.

The project aims to record the experiences of Indigenous communities before, during and after major disasters, promote Indigenous leadership in disaster

response, recovery and resilience, and develop a suite of resources to strengthen Indigenous Disaster Resilience in Australia.

## Project rationale

Using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Disaster Assist, Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, NIDR researchers have demonstrated that Indigenous people can be uniquely vulnerable and disproportionately impacted by disasters. Since 2007, there have been 756 disasters declared across Australia. Indigenous people make up approximately 3.8% of the national population. The proportion of Indigenous people in Local Government Areas (LGAs) impacted by disasters since 2007 is nearly four times the national average, at 14.7%.

**756**

disasters declared since 2007

**3.8%**

National average  
Indigenous population

**14.6%**

average Indigenous  
population of impacted LGAs

This is not unique to particular jurisdictions. Indigenous people are over-represented in disaster affected populations in all states and territories. The table below shows the average Indigenous population across the state, the number of disasters declared since 2007, and the proportion of Indigenous people in disaster affected LGAs.



State or territory	NSW	Qld	Vic	WA	NT	Tas	SA	ACT
Average Indigenous population	3.4%	4.6%	1%	3.3%	26.3%	5.4%	2.4%	2.0%
Declared disaster since 2007	284	139	125	106	37	31	25	9
Proportion of Indigenous people in disaster affected LGAs	10%	24.1%	2.1%	16.9%	65.9%	6.9%	6%	2.1%

LGAs are increasingly being impacted by consecutive disasters. 156 LGAs have experienced 15 or more disasters since 2007. 79% of these LGAs have an Indigenous proportion of their population higher than the national average. The average Indigenous population proportion of these LGAs is nearly five times higher than the national average, at 18.42%.

**3.8%** National average Indigenous population

**79%** Percentage of LGAs impacted by 15 or more disasters since 2007 with an Indigenous population proportion higher than the national average

**18.42%** Average Indigenous population of LGAs impacted by 15 or more disasters since 2007

This data demonstrates that Indigenous peoples continue to be disproportionately impacted by disasters. Given the population profile of Indigenous people in Australia, with 33% of people aged under 15, these trends will not only continue, but worsen.

## Intended outcomes

The project aims to deliver the following outcomes:

- New evidence and authoritative guidance as a knowledge base regarding Indigenous peoples and disaster resilience
- An Indigenous disaster resilience Community of Practice
- Resources to support Indigenous communities and organisations to acknowledge and enhance Indigenous leadership and disaster resilience
- Culturally safe, healing-centred and trauma-informed methodology for engaging with Indigenous peoples impacted by disaster, to be used by communities and emergency management personnel, to improve processes and experiences of disasters.
- *A National Framework to Enhance the Resilience of Indigenous People and Communities*

A published handbook guide on Indigenous disaster resilience

## Translation and implementation potential

Through the delivery of key outputs such as the National Framework and handbook guide, the project aims to celebrate and promote Indigenous leadership, and create lasting change in the structures, institutions, and processes of emergency management and disaster resilience, across Australia.

## Further information

For full project details head to: <https://naturalhazards.com.au/research/research-projects/foundations-indigenous-disaster-resilience>

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