Program Overview

Program Goal: To take a community development approach to recovery and enable long term and sustainable development for communities.

Objectives:

1. To improve community resilience and disaster preparedness capacity
2. To strengthen community cohesion and increase individual sense of wellbeing and positive outlook.
3. To support local environment rehabilitation, regeneration, and productivity

Disaster Preparedness & Resilience

Community Cohesion & Individual Wellbeing

Environmental Regeneration, Preservation & Productivity

Program Overview

Project Name	Bushfire Recovery and Community Development, NSW
Start Date	December 2020
Completion Date	December 2022
Delivery Method	Mixed model - direct implementation (vinnies staff)'; partnerships with community-based organisations; and support for existing projects
Locations	6 Local Government Areas (LGAs)
Target Groups	All ages but focused on whole of community – additional emphasis on vulnerable groups in community including those with a disability/health issue, indigenous, socially isolated.

BRCD is Asset-based Program Approach
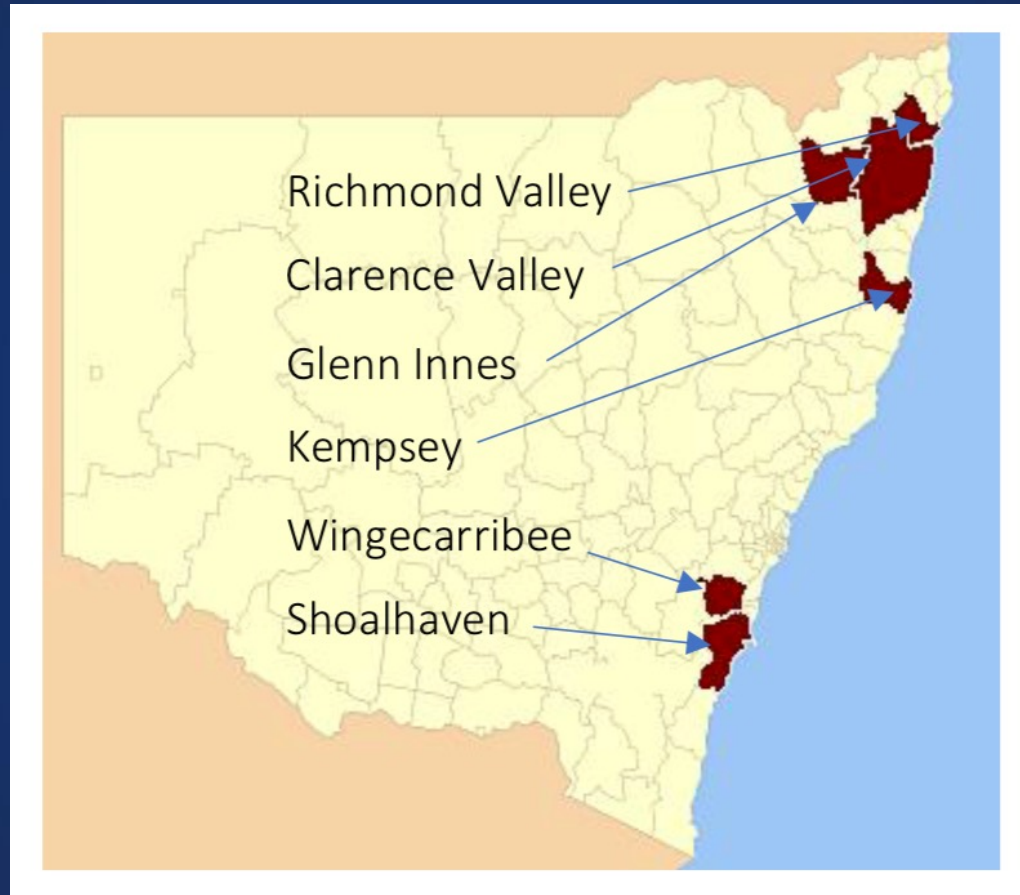
Achievements *(to Dec 21)*

- 3400+ people involved in community-based activities
- 78 activities running/planned across 6 LGAs

Clarence Valley	Kempsey	Richmond Valley	Shoalhaven	Wingecarribee & Glenn Innes
16	24	13	21	4

- Skills program via TAFE agreement
- Person-centred emergency preparedness (PCEP) piloted
- Whole of community impact (Wytaliba)
- Community preparedness systems created (first aid, communications, hazard mapping)
- 8 (so far) Not-for-profits received capacity building support

VINNIES REBUILDS RESTORES RENEWS
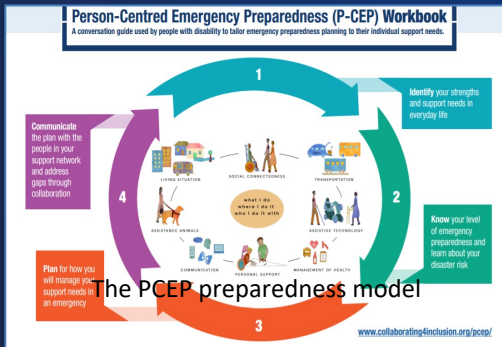
Achievements *(to Dec 21)*

TAFE-run Chainsaw Course

The PCEP preparedness model

Kreative Koalas - School-based environmental awareness/artistic expression

First-aid for community members

Bushfire regeneration – supporting nurseries and planting programs

St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

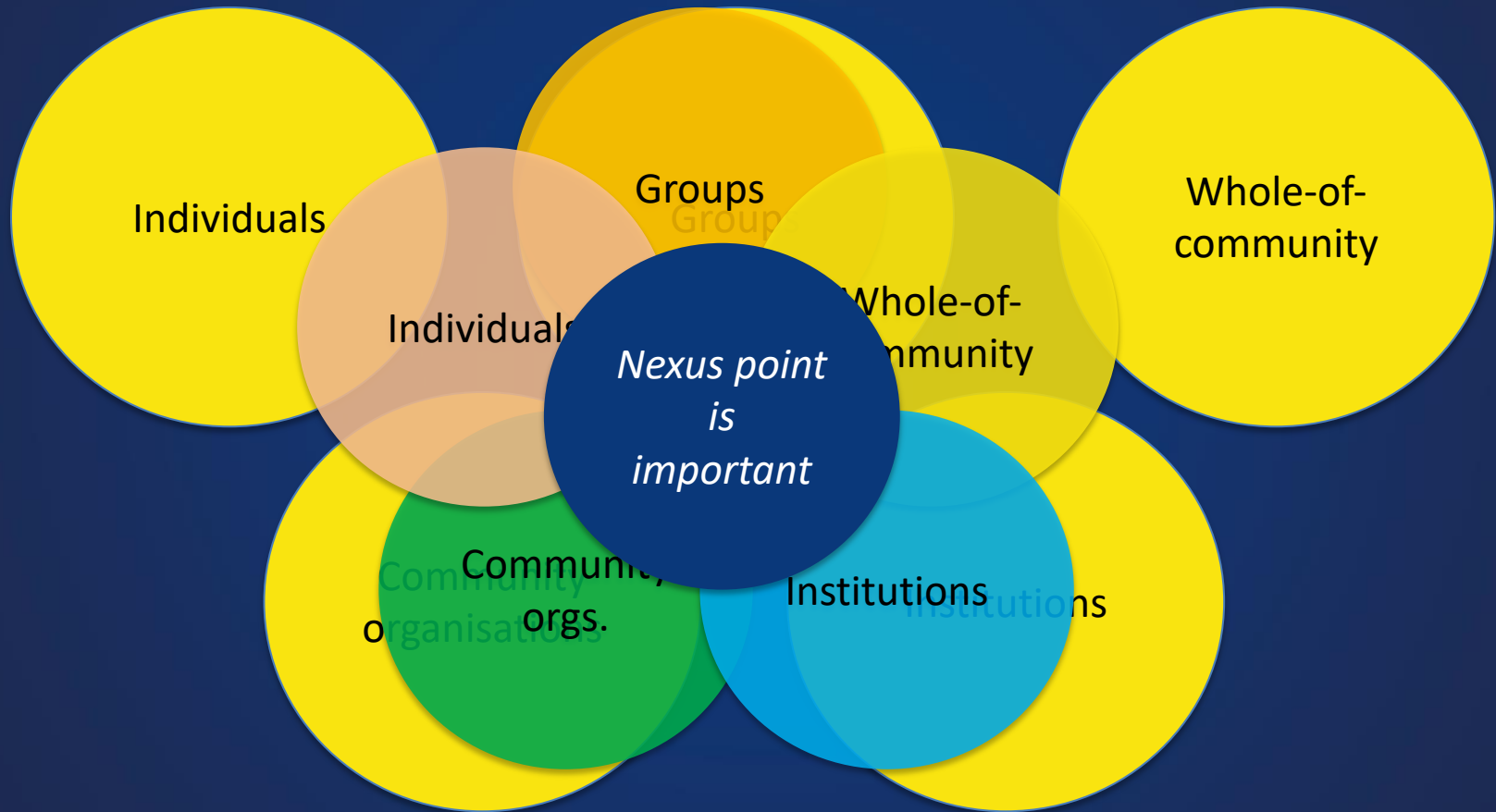**VINNIES** REBUILDS RESTORES RENEWS

Disclaimer

- BRCD is grassroots Community Development Program
- Informed by evidence and demonstration of successful practice
- Collects data and evidence
- Not academic-level
- Hence the ideas presented here are anecdotal, and based on grassroots experience and practice
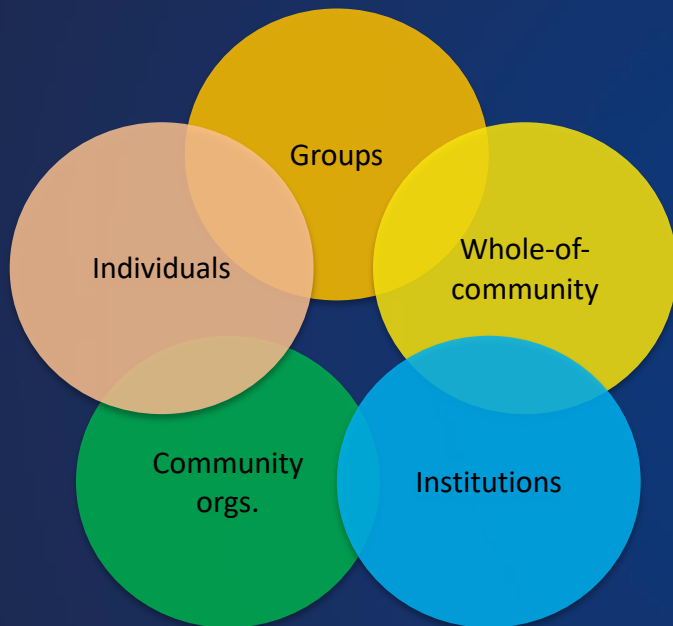
What is Community?

St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Individuals

Groups

Whole-of-community

Individuals

Whole-of-community

Nexus point
is
important

Community
orgs.

Institutions

VINNIES REBUILDS RESTORES RENEWS

What is Community?

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Institutions

Each stakeholder brings a unique set of characteristics, including:

- Skills and knowledge

- Experience

- Connections (people & environment)

- Physical assets

- Power relations

- Cohesion (tightknit or not)

- Trauma

- Diversity

- Commitment & Readiness

- Services (for groups)

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What is Community?

Each community's configuration determines (in large part) its ability to recover after a disaster.

An old but simple idea that *'Context is King'*

Resilience – what's worked in BRCD areas?

Characteristics that are common to individuals/communities progressing well, include:

- **Social network**– having a network of support is critically important – the reality is that govt./services unlikely to reach in time
- **Community bonds** - in small villages where services are few, 'neighbourliness' is an important social asset
- **Self-reliance** - certain amount is undoubtedly very influential
- **Preparation** – those more prepared fare better, but preparedness is highly influenced by socio-economic factors (e.g. insurance)
- **Learning from experience** – cliché to say take a positive from a negative but it is true – PTG (post traumatic growth)
- **A bond to a place** – desire to stay, rebuild and endure is incredibly powerful motivator
- **Socio-economic factors** – money and education definitely help (e.g. lawyer vs. aged worker navigating local DA processes)

Resilience – what's challenging* to recovery?

Characteristics that are common to individuals and communities progressing well, include:

- **Bureaucracy /overlapping jurisdictions**– inflexible systems not designed to accommodate the complexity of recovery needs
- **Support expectation –** communities anticipate government will help but reality is services are not sufficiently resourced
- **Social dislocation** – small network increases vulnerability – particularly for likely vulnerable groups (aged, living with a disability, chronically ill etc.)
- **Over-self reliance -** Community stoicism often a veneer - when you take services people use them, but often don't seek them out themselves
- **Technology** - ironically a weakness – poor coverage in rural areas vs increasing push to provide info/service digitally
- **Socio-economic factors** – the most vulnerable are the hardest hit

* Major ones

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Achievement – A Case Study in Resilience

Maude Smith wanted her community to rebuild not just in a physical sense. "Rebuilding had to be done emotionally and mentally too, and this should be done together." Maudie and other Willawarrin community champions discussed this with Vinnies and the result was the ***Willawarrin Women's Group.***

"It always guarantees a good giggle and is something I look forward to. The group is made up of women from various backgrounds and ages but it works. Whilst the activities we do are good, it is more about the connection."

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Key Lessons and Way Forward

- Community input into local systems and decision making is critical – the state emergency plan framework currently missing community voice

- Recovery organisations should piggyback on local community plans/strategies/visions (not impose one)

- Building/improving community skills, confidence and resource base is an investment that will return long-term gains

- Government/business systems need to build into their systems/process adaptability (and empathy).

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St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Key Lessons and Way Forward

- Fundamentally, we need to move re-calibrate our philosophy about disasters (any type)

- Shift the needle from rapid response (intense, chaotic, expensive and taxing)

- Shift the needle to preparedness - preparing communities and building anticipatory systems - invest in that. Especially building up the wealth of community assets that exist.

VINNIES REBUILDS RESTORES RENEWS

Thank you

Questions and feedback