



PLAN C
OUR PLAN IS THE COMMUNITY

Community Carer and Responder Program

Evaluation report on progress to date

AUGUST 2023



Summary

Our evaluation has found that the Community Carer and Responder (CCR) program has had significant achievements, including improved community resilience, increased awareness of disaster preparedness, and the formation of strong community bonds. Tangible outcomes include the creation of risk reduction plans, the formation of neighbourhood resilience groups, the organisation of many community-building events and food security initiatives, the setting-up of emergency radio communications, and more. One of the greatest benefits of the CCR program has been enhancing networks and connecting community leaders across the Northern Rivers. The CCR project also enabled local solutions to disaster preparedness and recovery, established well-being initiatives, and addressed the needs of vulnerable groups in disaster situations.

There has been a notable increase in disaster preparedness due to local CCR-led initiatives, such as community emergency plans in Nimbin, radio networks in Uki, and the provision of backup communications in Main Arm's community hall.

The CCR project has also transformed the perception of emergencies from being external problems to shared responsibilities. This shift is observable in proactive activities undertaken by CCRs, such as local bushfire preparedness activities in Rappville or the enablement of neighbourhood resilience groups such as in Pottsville. Further tangible evidence of this can be seen in the additional CCRs trained beyond the original 100 (188 in June 2023) and actively engaged in resilience-building efforts.

The project has catalyzed transformative recovery by imparting knowledge, confidence, and skills to participants, leading to a profound personal shift. Testimonials, like Justin's who cites significant fear reduction and empowerment, along with data collected by the Plan C team, indicate enhanced community connection and a sense of empowerment.

Plan C has demonstrated an adaptive approach to program management, including eliciting feedback from CCRs across surveys, interviews, focus groups and through analysing group discussions online. The training program, mentoring and supplementary activities have been continuously updated and amended based on this feedback. Further opportunities to amend the program include: development and implementation of a 'Young CCRs' program, creating sub-modules on topics such as food security, furthering engagement with First Nations groups, exploring the gendered dimensions of community resilience building, researching the motivations for community action and mindset shifts, ensuring greater sustainability of funding sources and potentially expanding the CCR training to other parts of Australia.

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1. Explanation of the Community Carer and Responder (CCR) program 2022-2023

The overarching aim of the CCR program has been to assist Northern Rivers residents to proactively build community and disaster resilience. The major outcome proposed by the initial CCR project proposal was for:

“100 Community Carers and Responders to be identified, selected and trained in first aid, psychological first aid, resilience and regeneration, and mobilised to build disaster resilience in 5 LGAs affected by the 2019-2020 bushfires”.

This was subsequently extended to 6 LGAs (Tweed, Byron, Kyogle, Ballina, Lismore and Richmond). In addition to directly helping individuals recover from bushfires and other disasters it was proposed that volunteer CCRs would actively support their community in disaster prevention and preparedness; help coordinate with emergency agencies and assist their community during disasters; and support broader community recovery post-disaster. Beyond disasters, CCRs would also strengthen links within their community, by creating an atmosphere conducive to caring for each other, identifying the most vulnerable in their communities and exploring ways to support them, organising local events to bring the community together, and facilitating connections within their community.

The CCR program has received funding from the NSW Government’s Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund, Department of Communities and Justice, Healthy North Coast and the Northern Rivers Community Foundation. It has also been supported in its implementation through in-kind contributions of countless volunteers from across the Northern Rivers region. The program was developed with a range of key values underpinning it, including non-violent communication, active hope and trauma informed approaches.

CCRs received 3 days of free training, which included self-care, disaster resilience, community building, emergency communications as well as food, water, and energy security. They also completed a day of first aid and a day of psychological first aid. Upon graduation, participants received a CCR cap, t-shirt and solid first-aid kit, were then mentored by Plan C to lead a project to build the resilience of their own community and were regularly invited to additional workshops, community events, and field visits to deepen their knowledge but also connections with each other. In addition, many CCRs maintained their connection to and support for each other through joining the CCR Facebook group and/or WhatsApp group.

2. Objectives of the CCR program

The CCR program has four overarching objectives as they appeared in the original proposal to the NSW Government's Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund: 1. Recruit and train 100 CCRs, 2. Establish a functioning network connecting these CCRs, 3. Assist CCRs to mobilise their own communities for resilience building and 4. For Plan C to create a monitoring and evaluation process in order to continuously monitor and improve the program. These four objectives with corresponding outputs and proposed outcomes linked with each of these objectives are found in Table 1. Further detail about the implementation of outputs can be found in Appendix 1. This report assesses to what extent, and how, these outputs and outcomes have been met.

Objective	Outputs (including amendments to the original proposal)	Outcomes
1. Recruit, train and equip 100 Community Carers and Responders	x5: A campaign is launched in each of the 6 LGAs to inform the wider community about the CCR network and encourage residents to apply to the CCR positions	CCR increased knowledge, skills and confidence to facilitate resilience and regeneration
	x1: The establishment of a CCR network is showcased at Renew Fest's annual festival and used as an awareness and recruiting tool	
	x3 days: development of training materials for the 3 days of CCR training	
	x100: CCRs who support their community throughout the disaster management cycle and build community resilience through regeneration are recruited and inducted (trained)	
	x1 day: Delivery of standard first aid courses (with Pacific Coast First Aid) for 100 CCRs across the 5 LGAs	
	x1 day: Delivery of psychological first aid (PFA) courses for 100 CCRs across the 5 LGAs ¹	
	1x: Coach and employ CCRs to deliver the CCR standard training in conjunction with Plan C staff.	
	x100: CCRs are equipped with high-visibility vests and caps	
	x100: CCRs are equipped with first aid kits	
2. Establish a network of CCRs	x1: A Resilient Byron CCR workspace is created on the Slack social media app to facilitate informal communication between CCRs	Feelings of belonging to their community and connectedness (means

¹ Note that there were delays to implementing PFA due to the lack of suitable in person courses available in the Northern Rivers. Plan C worked with trained psychologist Elizabeth Gwynne to create a one day PFA training.

	x1: A Resilient Byron CCR group is created on Facebook to facilitate informal communication between CCRs x1: Using the network, momentum is maintained via the on-going sharing of experiences and ideas among CCRs x1: Coordination and information-sharing between CCRs and relevant stakeholders (local governments, emergency services, community organisations, etc.) is on-going	to connect) to the CCR network (in ways that are inclusive and safe)
3. Mobilise CCRs to facilitate/ contribute to resilience and regeneration activities in their communities	Incorporate community building and project development into CCR training x1: CCR mentoring program developed	Activities and events have contributed to communities' disaster preparedness, understanding of risks, connectedness
4. Establish mechanisms for reflection and continuous improvement of the project	Summary report from CCR evaluation, including impact and which approaches led to impact (enablers of resilience), barriers encountered and recommended changes.	Implementation of CCR project is used to adjust Plan C's technical and managerial approaches and in the design of future projects

Table 1. Proposed CCR Program objectives, outputs and outcomes.

The CCR program also pledged to the initial donor (the NSW Government) that the program aimed to address the following disaster recovery outcomes:

- The needs of vulnerable groups are addressed in disaster recovery,
- The community is aware of the disaster recovery processes,
- The community can express its changing disaster recovery needs,
- Community members are aware of the risks of future disasters,
- The community has improved capacity and capability to respond to future disasters,
- Government, private sector, civil society and organisations are engaged in plans for mitigation and management of the recovery

Specific examples of how these disaster recovery outcomes have been addressed by the CCR program and the CCR Network are also contained in this report.

3. Evaluation methodology

Team

Monitoring and evaluation of the CCR program implementation was overseen by the Plan C Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning team made up of: Rebecca McNaught (Griffith University), Emma Pittaway (Sydney University), Dr. Jean Renouf (Southern Cross University) and Dr. Jo Longman (Sydney University). We used an adaptive approach to linking monitoring to project management, continuously refining the project based on collected feedback.

Data collection

Quantitative data, such as the number and demographics of participants, and Whatsapp group and Facebook activity were collected and analysed descriptively. In addition, CCRs took part in a pre and post-training survey online which measured knowledge, confidence and skills before and after the full five days of the training.

Qualitative data collection involved 8 place-based one to one face to face interviews (across Lennox Head, Main Arm, Lismore, Murwillumbah, Pottsville and Uki) ranging from x to y minutes, and 3 focus groups involving x CCRs and lasting between x and y minutes (2 online, 1 in person before a 'Facing Up' event). CCRs were also given the opportunity to give constructive or positive feedback at the end of each training day (as per photo below).

The 'Most Significant Change' methodology (Davies & Dart, 2005) was coupled with the comprehensive Twigg's (2009) 'Characteristics of Resilience' framework to understand individual, family and wider community impact. The most significant change approach was used to capture stories of CCR perceptions of change (internally or externally) as a result of taking part in the CCR program. Stories are then shared with others (via this report, through Plan C social media and case studies) to enable learning about outcomes and to understand which are the most impactful components of the program. The Twigg resilience framework is a comprehensive framework that incorporates 5 overarching thematic areas of governance; risk assessment; knowledge and education; risk management and vulnerability reduction and disaster preparedness and response. Within these 5 thematic areas are 28 components of resilience incorporating detailed indicators of a disaster resilient community. Selected CCRs were asked to rank their community's work towards the 28 components of resilience as occurring – 'pre-floods', 'post-floods', 'aspiring to' or 'not relevant'. Results across data sources were captured in a spreadsheet against the program objectives, outputs and outcomes (Table 1 above).

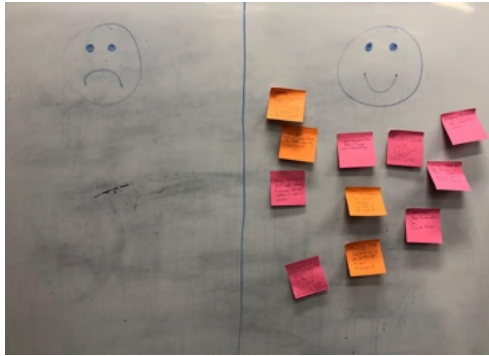


Photo: Participants are encouraged to provide immediate feedback after each training

4. Profile of CCRs

As of June 2023, 188 people have completed the 3 day CCR content training (not first aid and PFA) across the Northern Rivers. The distribution of CCRs across six local government areas is illustrated in Figure 1. Four CCRs identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander peoples. CCR demographics are highlighted in Figure 2. Given current enrolments, it is expected that this number will increase to 232 participants having completed 3 days of content training (not first aid and PFA) by the end of August 2023.

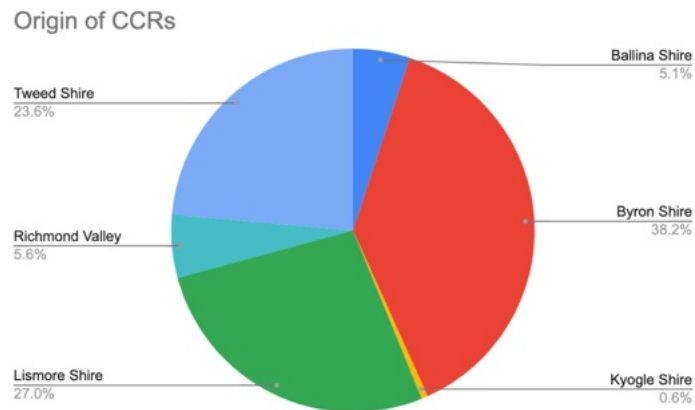


Figure 1. Place of origin of CCRs

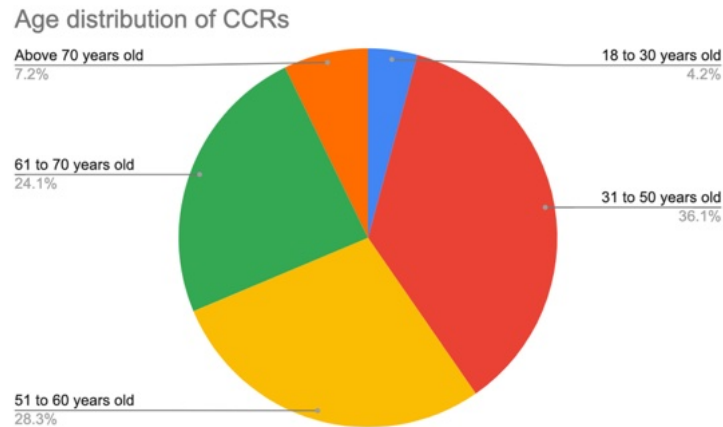


Figure 2. Age distribution of CCRs

The vast majority of CCRs described themselves as belonging to multiple community types. Most common was of geographical community (including ‘wide community’ such as ‘Northern Rivers’), then existing personal, familial and social networks (such as family, friends, neighbours) and then sub-communities such as LGBTQIA+ communities, spiritual groups, women’s groups, sporting groups and support groups for people living with a disability.

Post-bushfires, participants of the Community Carers and Responders program experienced compound disaster impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and flooding in the Northern Rivers. Exemplified by the statistics from the pre-training survey of CCRs in Figure 3.







<p>One-third of CCR participants were personally bushfire affected</p> 	<p>21.2% were personally drought affected</p> 	<p>79.5% of the participants were personally flood affected</p> 
<p>71.4% were affected by COVID-19</p> 	<p>23.2% had experienced housing insecurity</p> 	<p>30.5% had experienced job insecurity</p> 

Figure 3. Compound disaster impacts experienced by CCRs

5. Outcomes

6.1 CCRs have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to facilitate resilience and regeneration in their communities

The CCR training increased the level of participant's knowledge and skills to better prepare themselves and their communities. For example, 54.8% of pre-training respondents vs. 72.2% of post-training respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement "I am confident about facilitating the development of resilience and/or regeneration in my community". Likewise, 61.4% of pre-training respondents vs. 100% of post-training respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement "I have good skills to facilitate the development of resilience and/or regeneration in my community".

- **The CCR program, through its training and mentoring has focused specifically on capacity building and knowledge building and sharing. The sharing of local experiences and knowledge by participants and trainers has been highly valued by CCRs.**

"Local knowledge with practical insights is so good" Day 3 feedback

"Disaster preparedness info was fantastic, good range of info, skills and actions" Day 2 feedback

- **Participants expressed that they have increased knowledge on the risk of future disasters:**

"I like the balance of practical skills and the way it is understood in the broader scheme of climate change and future disasters" Kerry

- **With an emphasis on self-help and providing resources for mental health and wellbeing, the CCR program has contributed to the improvement of community well-being.**

"From Day 1 I took away taking care of my self-care first so I can be better of service" Day 1 feedback

"Lovely people, gave me good advice on self-help, and looking after myself, usually everyone else before me. Thanks :)" Day 1 feedback

"On the first day, some big feelings came up, and participants showed deep emotion about what they've been through in the region. I found my own deep emotion was triggered deep inside and was released. I felt safe and it felt free to come up. I felt supported and held by the group. What happened was that that fear turned into faith in community. Resilience as a term is put around a lot but it is more than that. More than hope in the community, more than wishing for your community. Knowing it is there" Justin

- **CCR participants are able to support others with Psychological First Aid (PFA) and building community connections. Scenario enactment through role plays have consistently been valued by CCRs attending the PFA training.**

What I found most useful in the PFA training:

"Having the space to think about how I would respond, how would I be able to support someone in crisis" – PFA survey participant

"Role play - seeing how it can be applied in action" – PFA survey participant

"Systematic approach/framework to apply to unfamiliar and uncertain situations" – PFA survey participant

- **We have received many testimonies of the life changing nature of attending the CCR program for individuals:**

"What it took from me was it took away fear. It took away so much fear, to be with community like that, in a focused, positive, empowering, safe environment turned out to be one of the most powerful healings in my now adult life. It was big and it happened quite quickly" Justin

"What changed was that I became very isolated in my own struggles in 2022. Doing the trainings gave me a realisation that other people have adversities as well. As a community we can come together where one person is strong one is weak, we all have experiences and skill sets that we can utilise as a community to overcome the challenges" Matthew

- **Attendees noted in their feedback the usefulness of understanding the different emotional phases of recovery and could identify where they and their communities were along the spectrum of recovery.**

"Has been super-helpful to understand the patterns of disaster recovery. The disaster stages graph was so useful, I understand that we might not be at the bottom of the recovery curve yet. Understanding the phases of disaster helped me realise that everyone is at different stages of recovery" Bec

- **Bushfires were followed by a period of COVID-19 isolation and in many cases community division in the Northern Rivers. Many participants reflected that the program helped realise the importance of community connection for recovery and gave them the confidence to move forward and connect with others.**

"I'm part of the local hall committee and rural fire brigade. Our community has been quite separated for a long time. I'm involved in the slow process of trying to bring community back together. We held a BBQ which fell in with 'get ready' weekend. We spoke to people on the Friday and then lots turned up on the Saturday. We spoke with people who lost their houses in the 2019 fires. Our long-term focus is to set up the local hall as an evacuation centre" Anon

- **Participants valued exploring different disaster scenarios, including bushfire, which has led to increased household disaster preparedness knowledge.**

"I found what you can do to build/prepare your houses for bushfires really helpful" Helen.



Photo: 114 CCRs have received a cap and t-shirt at the completion of 3 days of CCR training (which are then followed by 1 day First Aid and 1 day PFA training).

6.2 Increased connection across the CCR network in the Northern Rivers

- **CCRs have an established means of ongoing connection via online platforms:**

An analysis of the CCR WhatsApp group content was undertaken for the periods October/November 2022 and April/May 2023. Total content for the 2-month periods rose from 172 posts in 2022 to 393 in 2023. Plan C has used the CCR WhatsApp group to share information on Plan C workshop and mentoring opportunities, newsletters and sharing information and events from other sources (e.g. Byron Council grant opportunities, external events such as an emergency expo at Tweed Heads and updates from the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Authority). Plan C also promotes initiatives of CCRs (such as community connection and food swap events) and messages of encouragement and thanks.

In a two month period:

172 Whatsapp posts in 2022



393 Whatsapp posts in 2023

CCRs have used the WhatsApp group to request information (such as experiences CCRs have with installation of defibrillators in communities) and share external training opportunities, events and resources (such as non-violent communication and trauma recovery training opportunities). CCRs use the group to provide feedback and ask questions to Plan C about the CCR program (feedback on first aid kits and asking when training events are occurring). CCRs use the platform to share their own community projects (e.g. installation of a generator at the hall in Main Arm, community connection events to aid flood recovery) and encourage each other (e.g. acknowledging the triggering nature of heavy rainfall events). They also share items with each other (e.g. an excess of oranges), relevant news articles and external resources (such as communicating with your community, and resources for people working with blindness or low vision).

- **Through gaining the confidence and pathways to connect with other CCRs and volunteer networks, disaster-affected community members are assisting other disaster-affected community members through sharing inspiring approaches via the Whatsapp group, connecting with volunteer organisations, sharing recovery related information about events and resources available. We have found through experience that no other**

organisation is enabling this networking, information and resource exchange in the same way.

“The connections from that first day, they didn't take any work, as soon as we walked into that room, the connections just happened, we were all present and connected. To find that sort of environment in anything else that we do is quite difficult and the CCR program just nailed it. I've kept in touch with lots of people I met because I established a really deep connection with them” Dave

“I've made so many friends in Lismore and in the region through doing the CCR. With those friends I've got to know their passions and interests and connected CCR friends to other opportunities. For example, I invited other CCRs to the Grasstree fellowship” Clara

“We had 4 inches of water through and lost cars in our block of flats. When I first went to a volunteer meeting, I needed a lift in order to volunteer, and it made me talk to other people and connect with them. Talking to people built my confidence to put my hand up and volunteer for other things.” Anon

- **The training gave a Northern Rivers perspective, rather than just a local perspective, which increases the sense of connection as the region continues to grapple with recovery from a multitude of disasters.**

“I actually moved around to different locations for the training, which gave me an overview of how many people were in similar situations around the region, so that was actually a huge support just to know everyone was out there” Wendy

“The biggest benefit has been the connections with local groups and relationships that have been established” Elizabeth

- **On-going coordination and information-sharing between CCRs and relevant stakeholders is occurring**

Through the CCR training, participants have a greater understanding of disaster governance arrangements and stakeholders across the Northern Rivers. The CCR training modules include a module on working with emergency services and the Red Cross Community Resilience Teams concept is shared. Many CCRs have gone on to be active participants in CRTs and CRT members attend CCR training. In fact, members of the SES and Rural Fire Service have also attended the CCR training as participants.

Plan C is involved in the Byron Community Resilience Network where updates are given on the status of CCR network and training events. Plan C is also on the regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Sub-committee.

“I have done so much training in the last year and the CCR is still the most relevant and practical. It is done in a grass roots way, but you can also see how it is relevant in terms of the structural approach too. So I still think out of all the trainings, it is the most valuable so far. It is valuable for both individuals and organisation staff” Kerry

6.3 Community-led resilience projects and events have contributed to communities' preparedness, understanding of risks and connectedness

As of August 2023, CCRs have registered 68 community projects with Plan C and 30 community members are being mentored by Plan C on an ongoing basis. CCR Projects have covered a wide diversity of topic areas including: disaster preparedness (33), community building (29), communications (radio, satellite, social media) (12), water (5), disaster recovery (9), Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander project (4), mental health (14), health (9), housing (5), food (13), youth (1), disability (2), animals (4) & energy (4). Note some projects cover multiple topic areas as indicated by CCRs. Indications are that CCRs have been engaged in projects and community activities beyond the 68 registered.

There is a richness and diversity of projects and events being undertaken by CCRs which contribute to the multifaceted nature of resilience building across Northern Rivers communities. Drawing upon the Twigg resilience framework, interviews identified that communities have rapidly increased their implementation of or plans for preparedness and resilience building post-floods.



Photo: Isabel has been inspired as a CCR to continue involvement in the Clunes swap - exchanging produce, cuttings, seeds and plants

- **The CCR program connects with and supports place based research and First Nations initiatives already underway**

The project allowed Plan C to strengthen and support its collaboration with many organisations across the Northern Rivers, including: Resilient Lismore, Hub 2484 Murwillumbah, Together Pottsville (also operating as Pottsville Community Resilience Team), Main Arm Disaster Recovery Association, Northern Rivers Community Foundation, Wilsons Creek Community Association, South Golden Beach/New Brighton/Ocean Shores Community Resilience Team, Resilient Uki, Resilient Evans Head, Suffolk Park Community Association, Mullumbimby Residents Association, Nimbin Disaster Resilience Group, the Casino Community Garden, the Channon Resilience Hub, Mullumbimby Neighbourhood Centre, Shedding Community, Northern Rivers Healing Hub, Brunswick Valley Landcare, Scouts, several Rural Fire Service local brigades, several Country Women’s Associations local branches, as well as unincorporated organisations such as Connecting

Communities, Mullumbimby Emergency Response Collective, and the Swan Bay Neighbourhood Resilience. CCRs are involved in many of these groups and help connect these ultra-localised resilience and recovery efforts into a wider regional network.

The project also led to the exploration and strengthening of collaboration with First Nations organisations, including the Bundjalung Tribal Society, We Al-Li, Ngunya Jarjum, and the Minyumai Indigenous Rangers, paving the way for future opportunities to work together. Our work also extends to research and policy collaboration, including a publication on food security in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Futures (through another grant), and active involvement in research projects with the University of Sydney, Griffith University, and the University of Technology Sydney. Additionally, CCRs also developed their own local partnerships. As one example among many, we have mentored a CCR to help her bring together several different community organisations in Bangalow to jointly create a community disaster preparedness plan. We then brought together the Bangalow CWA, Men's Shed, NSW Police, Lions Club and Landcare for an initial workshop, which we co-facilitated, and which is followed by another one early August.

Appendix 2 includes five detailed case studies which showcase examples of CCR community resilience building from across the Northern Rivers (Uki, Pottsville, Main Arm, South Golden Beach and Lismore).

- **The CCR program has supported the community to improve capacity and capability to respond to future disasters.**

“The CCR training has been incredible, I have taken home what I learnt around risks, the preparation for bushfire I found really incredibly helpful, I went back to the family and spoke to my family, my partner and son and we will do the fire safety training at our local fire station” Day 2 feedback

“I have a lot more awareness of my house being a fire hazard, so I’m cleaning up the yard and gutters” Liz

- **CCRs have volunteered their expertise to assist vulnerable members of their communities post-disaster:**
- **During the CCR training days, participants shared their ideas for what sort of action they’d like to take in their communities. Some examples of how they would like to support seniors and people with a disability are shared here:**

“I am concerned for elderly and disabled in my street. Nobody evacuated in my street during the flood - I want to find a way to connect with them and support a better plan in our street” Anon

“I was brought into an elders group. We have a “connecting generations” activity organised, and may have a grant for connecting communities lunch in July. The purpose will be to reach out, create another Possum Creek bbq/cricket game” Anon

“I’m a CWA member, and do a lot around town with that, including a fashion parade tomorrow - showcasing recycled/sustainable fashion. We have a lot of elders in our community - there’s a space at the Hall - maybe there’s funding for balance classes for seniors!” Anon

“I work with people with disability - I have been talking with them and making disaster plans” Anon

- **CCR neighbourhood and community strengthening activities have focused specifically on capacity building and knowledge building and sharing, including sharing with friends and acquaintances.**

“I met people in the National Park past Kyogle and got talking about different scenarios. We discussed what they would do if comms were down and their community didn't have radios yet. I planted it as a seed that people were very interested in” SJ

- **Plan C, through support to CCRs, was able to enable local solutions to recovery and assist CCRs to link together to hold public events to support recovery and build social connection**

The CCR project incorporated a host of activities to spur local recovery solutions, all of which underpinned the critical elements of agency and empowerment. Incorporating the ‘Active Hope’ framework into the CCR training program enabled participants to cultivate resilience and navigate the path to recovery optimally. Through mentoring, we supported personal and communal growth, fostering a robust network of skilled, caring individuals ready to step up when required. This connectivity across the region created a sense of shared experience, solidarity and strength, making it easier for communities to come together in times of need. The sharing of stories played a crucial role in the healing process; it allowed individuals to process their experiences, develop empathy and learn from one another’s experiences. Lastly, our facilitation of fundraising and support for other funding initiatives provided essential resources for recovery efforts, giving the community the financial means to implement local recovery solutions.

6.4 Implementation of the CCR project has been used to adjust Plan C's technical and managerial approaches and in the design of future projects

The CCR program has been improved based on a process of continual feedback and revision. Adjustments have been made to improve the content, format, and delivery of training which have led to noticeable improvements. Plan C divides CCR feedback into positive (useful or liked) and constructive (suggestions for improvement). An example is in relation to Non-Violent Communication content which received the highest amount of constructive feedback and suggestions for change (9 specific comments in day-by-day feedback from participants, with only 2 positive pieces of feedback). The material was reviewed by the training facilitators and since that revision there has been 17 pieces of positive feedback and one piece of constructive feedback. Through monitoring and thematically arranging feedback into training topic areas, the team can adjust content and see the impact that it has on participant experiences.

Another example of adaptability by the program was when 7 staff and volunteers from Plan C met in early May 2023 to undertake a review of the CCR training content. The discussion included reflections from Plan C volunteers who had attended the training, CCR reflections captured in the program evaluation (including an analysis of day by day feedback) and observations/discussions by CCR trainers. The workshop provided practical suggestions and Jean Renouf (CEO Plan C) reviewed the training materials accordingly.

Post-CCR training feedback indicates that the adaption of materials based on feedback has led to locally relevant solutions and a feeling amongst CCRs that they have had input into the program. For example, 88.9% of post-training respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “I feel like I had the opportunity to make suggestions on how the CCR project could be improved”. Likewise,

72.2% of post-training respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “I feel like my suggestions were considered and implemented where relevant”

- **Plan C navigated a complex environment to adapt and deliver the program**

We maintained a flexible approach to delivering the project by proactively adjusting our strategies and timelines in response to these ongoing changes and challenges. This included accommodating for staff and stakeholder availability, being patient and adaptable with community engagement efforts, and continually cultivating relationships with new personnel in various institutions. We also offered the CCR training in a number of different locations on an on-going basis, and offered participants to choose to attend the training location and dates that suit them best. Whilst this involved more work for us in terms of following up with each application during their CCR journey, it allowed CCRs to better fit the training days in their schedule. Overall, this dynamic approach allowed us to navigate the complexities and ensure the continued progress and effectiveness of the CCR project.

6. Outcomes additional to those anticipated in Table 1

- **We have been surprised by the ripple effect of our work – this wasn’t planned. By far the greatest strategy for recruiting more CCRs is through word of mouth and CCRs recommending it:**

“So, I just finished the CCR program and let me tell you, it was a wild ride! Emotional, liberating, empowering...and that was just the coffee breaks! But seriously, it's amazing how the program turns fear into empowerment and brings people together. I'm now sharing it with everyone I see - on the bus, in the grocery store, even my cat's starting to get tired of hearing about it.” Anon

- **We weren’t anticipating the impetus that the CCR program would give to local community groups. Although Plan C set out to provide mentor support to CCRs to see their knowledge turn into action, we have been surprised at the extent to which CCRs are mentoring each other through friendships and the support network. Many participants have expressed value in knowing that they aren’t alone in trying to enact positive change in their communities.**

“The benefit of doing the CCR has got something to do with hope. Connecting in with others that are doing really important but practical stuff in the space” Kerry

- **The program is sustainable because it embeds capacity within communities**

The sustainability of the CCR project is embedded in its design. The project focuses on equipping individuals with knowledge and skills that remain with them beyond the training. Also, the strong community network established through the project promotes continued engagement and mutual support. The continuous learning and capacity-building components of the project, such as regular additional workshops and training sessions (for example in food security, art therapy and resilient

home retrofits), ensure that there's a steady supply of competent CCRs ready to step in when needed. We have also established a mentorship program to foster the transfer of knowledge from experienced CCRs to newcomers. The project also ensures its own relevance and longevity by nurturing relationships with local councils and emergency services.

7. Challenges encountered along the way - key themes

Following the February/March 2022 floods, we undertook deep reflection to understand the dynamics that occurred in community response and how to best support the community to build effective support networks. We sensed an enormous and widespread fatigue among community members, reeling from the many disasters and crises that had continuously affected the Northern Rivers leading to these past few years, and as such found very little energy to undertake community resilience-building activities. This fatigue was felt throughout the past year and at times CCRs experienced difficulties to mobilise their communities despite their best efforts.

To add to this, the Covid-19 pandemic seriously affected several of Plan C staff and stakeholders, making it more difficult to plan and sustain activities as energy levels and availability varied greatly from month to month. Similarly, the CCR program remains vulnerable due to its high dependence on a small number of individuals to run the program, including the CEO who has the technical knowledge to undertake the bulk of training. Measures are being implemented to try and offset this with CCRs being recruited and trained as trainers.

Despite Plan C making efforts to continually maintain and cultivate relationships across community groups, NGOS, government agencies and businesses, we acknowledge that the challenges of the post-flood environment stretched relationships. Plan C has gradually re-established relationships by reaching out, directly and indirectly to a number of organisations. We believe that given the climate crisis we are experiencing globally and locally, the contributions of many organisations are necessary and complementary. We remain very open and committed to building bridges for the benefit of all.

A further challenge was the ongoing change of personnel within different institutions, in particular at local level. We informed and consulted a number of mayors, councillors, council staff (in particular their resilience and recovery officers) throughout the project, but it not only takes time to build and maintain such relationships, but these have to be frequently re-built as elected officials aren't always re-elected and staff move on to other positions, in particular in the aftermath of the 2022 floods.

At present, 80% of CCRs are female, which is an indication that community resilience building has a gendered dimension to it. Plan C has begun to reflect on what might attract more men to undertaking the training. There is also scope to find ways to engage with LGAs that haven't been as represented as others in the CCR training, such as Ballina, Kyogle and Richmond. Ongoing efforts to work alongside First Nations groups is required, including the option of offering a co-designed 1 day module.

One challenging aspect of undertaking the evaluation is around the diversity of opinions on what needs to change within the CCR program. For example, just listening to constructive feedback on what needs to be changed would negate the positive feedback on the same topics. While we had many indicating that the content was too dense, we also had just as many indicating that it was just

right. This indicates that we need to cater for a range of learning types in the ongoing development of materials.

8. Reflections on broader funding/practice landscape

From our experience with implementing the CCR program, we would favour any future recovery program to foster a closer working relationship between community groups, incorporated or not, with entities such as the NSW Reconstruction Authority. This would facilitate better communication, alignment of objectives, and synchronization of efforts, ultimately making the recovery process more effective and efficient.

Moreover, creating avenues for collaboration with other recovery agencies would not only allow for a pooling of resources and expertise, but also ensures a comprehensive, all-encompassing approach to recovery, addressing all dimensions of community needs. By promoting collaborative and integrated approaches, we can enhance the overall resilience of communities, making them better equipped to face future disasters.

Another takeaway is the importance of facilitating a more seamless transition between the stages of response, recovery, prevention, and preparedness in disaster management. Traditionally, these stages have been approached as separate phases, but we've seen that they are deeply intertwined and often overlap. Recent years have demonstrated very clearly that being in the midst of recovering from one disaster does not preclude communities from being affected by other disasters and life stresses.

Adopting an all-hazards approach is also crucial, as it acknowledges the interconnected nature of disasters, as highlighted by the 2020 Bushfire Royal Commission. Disasters don't occur in isolation and can be triggered by a chain reaction of events. As such, planning and preparation should incorporate the potential for concurrent or sequential hazards.

Last, when it comes to building resilience and recovering from severely disruptive events, a “wider-than-disaster” scope would be worth considering. Communities have been affected not only by bushfires, heatwaves, droughts and floods, but also by Covid-19, a housing crisis, an epidemic of loneliness, living with disabilities, navigating the rising cost of living, etc. As such, any community resilience program should tackle both disasters and socio-economic crises. The value add of the CCR program is that it looks at disaster recovery, preparedness and resilience building through this broader lens of what communities are collectively experiencing.

9. Where to from here?

Based on the results of this evaluation and progress to date, there are numerous options for Plan C to evolve the CCR program and the organisation's broader work in the years to come:

- Young CCR pilot

- Based on the observation that youth played a pivotal role in flood response, were often left out of recovery initiatives and discussions, and made up a very small percentage of CCRs, Plan C aimed to create a youth pilot program. Funding was crowdsourced in May-July 2023 and matched by a donor. A pilot for Young CCR training is currently in the process of being created. Now that Plan C has secured initial funding for a Young CCR pilot, this will need to be designed, piloted with young people and delivered.
- Sustained funding
 - The sustainability of the CCR project outcomes is embedded through equipping individuals with knowledge and skills and networks that remain with them beyond the training. However, due to the nature of grant funding, the training of further CCRs remains highly grant dependent. Plan C is devising a fundraising strategy to diversity funding options going forward. This includes potential philanthropic options, offering paid training courses and broadening the scope of funding applied for to include community development, health and wellbeing and youth funding streams, beyond those of disaster resilience.
- Potential to expand the CCR network
 - In the Northern Rivers: if we had 1000 CCRs we could change the face of the region. The question remains on where the saturation point is for training. Not everyone can commit to 5 days training. It may be worth exploring micro versions or modules that people can access in their own time online.
 - Across Australia: Potential to assist other regions of Australia and extend the model across Australia (e.g. Jean visiting Blue Mountains)
- In depth sub-modules
 - There is also the question of how to keep existing CCRs engaged and skilled up. Additional advanced courses could be offered now that there is a critical mass of CCRs trained in the 5 days course. It may be possible to branch into some aspects of resilience building further. For example, by creating a detailed one day training on food security, radio communications or leadership skills development.
- Publications based on the evidence
 - There is great potential for promoting learning from implementing the CCR program and creating publications based on the evidence contained in this report. Examples include research articles, pieces in 'The Conversation', case studies, social media posts, and visual displays
- Potential for research to underpin some of the outstanding questions
 - Given community resilience building has a gendered dimension to it (80% of CCRs are female), this is also true of recovery initiatives that often struggle to engage men. It is worth exploring avenues for engaging men in the CCR program.
 - It isn't always easy engaging communities, as one CCR said, "Australians are great at showing up when disasters happen, but not good at planning". Research could be

undertaken to understand the motivations behind community action, how communities navigate complex relationships and which forms of information and community level communication formats are effective at enabling resilience and recovery outcomes.

- There is also a need for conducting research with very robust evaluation of some of the CCR projects, collecting baseline data before the CCR gets trained and then long term data on how that community tracks into the future using the Twigg framework
- Linking formal to informal emergency management
 - Recent discussions between Plan C and the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) in Tweed Byron indicate that the Northern Rivers is innovating how formal and informal emergency prevention, preparation, response and recovery can link together in New South Wales. There is further scope to support LEMC explore this evolution, including presenting results of the evaluation to the LEMC and connecting them with the CCR Network.
- Working towards a value based organisation
 - One respondent noted that at present the Plan C website only list what Plan C 'does' to people, not what values guide the decisions and action of the organisation. If inclusion is a value, for example, then that sets the direction of what action to take to make that happen. The CCR program was designed with explicit values in mind, such as trauma informed approaches and non-violent communication and action. The development and presence of Plan C values in advertising materials and website could attract people to the organisation further.
- Inclusive marketing and training content
 - In order to attract different groups to the CCR program and ensure impact across communities in the Northern Rivers, Plan C could work with a diverse set of champions to improve the accessibility and reach of the training. For example, diverse perspectives could be incorporated as part of the training content (through guest speakers during the training and/or prepared videos). Examples given by evaluation participants included people with disabilities, First Nations perspectives, gender and sexually diverse perspectives for example.
 - When the CCR program is advertised as becoming a CCR and becoming a CCR volunteer in a CCR network, this may prevent some organisations sending their staff to the training due to concern that their staff/volunteers will leave. The program could be marketed specifically to organisations for payment and attendance would build on the existing work and approaches of the organisation rather than participants becoming CCRs as such.
- Ready for the next disasters
 - The Australian Bureau of Meteorology suggests there is a strong likelihood of an El Nino event developing later this year, potentially increasing bushfire risk in light of recent rain and growth. These conditions will create a high degree of anxiety across the east coast of Australia given the widespread impacts of the 2019/20 bushfire

season. The coming period requires not only increased bushfire education and preparedness, but also knowledge enhancement on resilient landscaping (help for people to redesign the landscape around their houses) and resilient housing. Mental health support, and community connection events to enhance social support networks will be particularly relevant to ameliorate the post-traumatic stress of those recovering from bushfires. The CCR program is demonstrating that it is well equipped to provide this broad suite of holistic support to enable community action.

10. References

Davies, R & Hart, J (2005) The 'most significant change' technique - a guide to its use, Available at: <https://mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MSCGuide.pdf>

Twigg, J. (2009). Characteristics of a disaster-resilient community: a guidance note (version 2). Available at: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1346086/>

Appendix 1. Outputs of the CCR program

- **A campaign was launched in each of the 6 LGAs to inform the wider community about the CCR network and training which led to recruitment of CCRs.**

We used a multi-pronged approach to promote the project, including community meetings, media releases, social media engagement and the promotion of the CCR project at multiple community events:

- 1) **Community Meetings:** We organised several community meetings to reach out directly to local residents, discuss our initiatives, and address any concerns or queries. We used these meetings to disseminate information both about the project and about disaster preparedness, recovery, and resilience-building. They also provided a platform for individuals to share their experiences and insights, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and empowerment.
- 2) **Media Releases:** To reach a wider audience, we issued press releases and provided interviews detailing the project's objectives, progress, accomplishments and invited readers/listeners to enrol in the CCR project. These releases were sent to local and regional, and national media outlets, including The Guardian, The Echo, The Northern Rivers Times, the Northern Rivers Review, Tweed Valley Weekly, The Bangalow Herald, the Nimbin Times, as well as ABC Radio, Bay FM, Richmond Valley Radio and Radio 97 resulting in coverage that not only spread awareness but also highlighted the urgency of community resilience in the face of potential disasters.

Media examples:

'The Echo' November 2021:

<https://www.echo.net.au/2021/11/community-carers-and-responders-program-launched/>

Lismore App February 2022:

[Applications closing soon to join Community Carer and Responder network - News - News & Sport - The Lismore App](#)

Bangalow Herald March 2023:

https://issuu.com/bangalowherald/docs/the_herald_issue_69/s/20108249

- 3) **Social Media Engagement:** Recognizing the broad reach and immediacy of social media, we leveraged platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to engage with the community. Regular updates, success stories, live sessions, and informational content were shared to keep the community informed, engaged, and motivated. We created a specific Community Carers and Responders website, Facebook page, a private Facebook group and Instagram account. The public Facebook account currently has 517 followers (June 2023). We also encouraged community members to share their experiences and interact with our posts, creating a virtual community of support and knowledge sharing.
- 4) **Promotion at Community Events:** To connect with a wide variety of community members, we made our presence known at multiple local events, such as festivals, shared meals, and fundraisers. At these events, we set up information booths, conducted interactive workshops and discussions, and showcased success stories from the CCR project. This not only raised awareness but also allowed us to connect directly with individuals who might not have otherwise engaged with the project.

Plan C (named Resilient Byron at the time) hosted a 'Resilience hub' at Renew Fest 2021. The upcoming CCR program was discussed with people who came to the tent. See program for the list of topics discussed throughout the day: <https://www.renewfest.org.au/program>



Photo: Resilience Hub shared news of the CCR program at Renew Fest 2021.

- 5) **Collaborations and Partnerships:** We also partnered with local organizations and government entities to spread our message further, with some councils advertising CCR training in their communications.
- 6) **Personal Testimonials and Success Stories:** We highlighted stories of individuals who had benefitted from the CCR project, sharing how they had improved their disaster preparedness

and recovery capacities. This not only provided real-life examples of the project's impact but also motivated others to participate.

- 7) **Visibility:** we distributed a CCR t-shirt and CCR cap to all CCR participants, and it is now not uncommon to see CCRs proudly wearing these at public events.

Each of these strategies contributed to a comprehensive, community-oriented approach that helped us raise awareness about the project, promote disaster resilience, and aid in community recovery and empowerment.

When CCRs were asked how they heard about the CCR network, 24% listed Facebook, 46% by word of mouth (which suggests CCRs who complete the program are promoting it), 4% listed newspapers, 10% received an email about it, 2% saw it on Instagram, 2% saw a poster and less than 1% heard about it on radio.

- **A schedule for each day of training was developed and delivered**

The CCR training materials and agenda were regularly updated based on day by day feedback collated from participants at each round of training. Training notes were distributed to all participants. Topics, by order of appearance for the CCR training include:

DAY 1: Overview & context of CCR network and training, listening circle for post-disaster reflection - approach and activity, Active Hope, disaster and crisis - phases and actions, working with emergency services, handling stress.

DAY 2: Day 1 feedback, identify your risks, the fundamentals of disaster preparation, conscious communication, food & water security

DAY 3: Day 2 feedback, energy security, emergency communications - the hardware, community building, peer coaching - community resilience building project, graduation.



Photo: Radios and their use are covered in Day 3 of the CCR training.

- **An additional five CCR trainers have assisted deliver the training across the 6 LGAs**

Trainers who assisted in delivering the CCR training were recruited from Lismore LGA (2), Byron LGA (2) and Tweed LGA (1). Rather than develop a separate training for trainers, this approach was amended from the original proposal to coach CCRs to deliver the standard training in conjunction with Plan C staff.

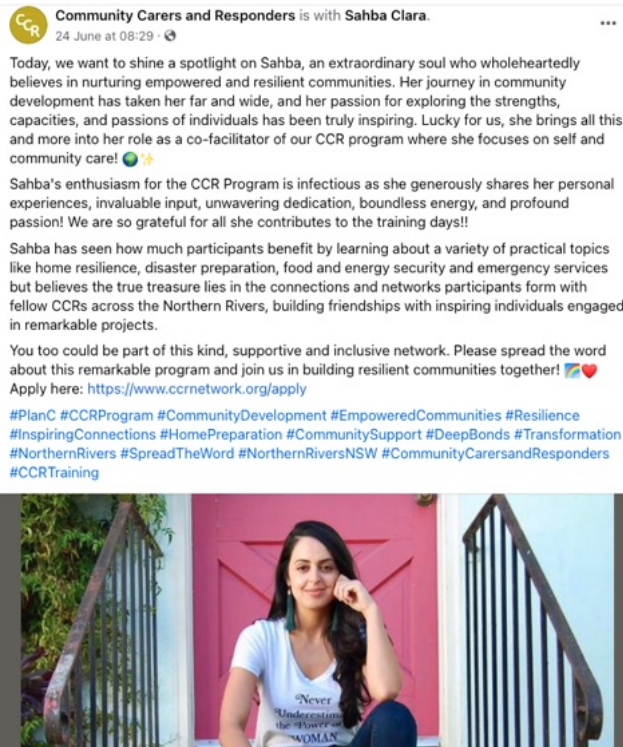


Photo: Sahba is one of five CCRs recruited to assist in delivering CCR training

- **First Aid and Psychological First Aid training was undertaken**

First aid training was undertaken by Pacific Coast First Aid, an accredited local business based in Byron Bay. First aid was offered at the following locations: Bexhill (3), Byron (17), Casuarina (1), Lismore (1), Uki (1) & Burringbar (1). As of June 2023, 128 CCRs have received 'Survival' first aid kits.

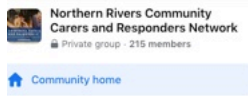
Psychological First Aid (PFA) is a technique for assisting people in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic incident or disaster. The basic principle of PFA is that, in the immediate aftermath of the traumatic event, support from a trained compassionate individual may aid in long-term recovery. PFA is not focused on any mental health diagnosis and works to prevent change from occurring, and as such is also different to the Mental Health First Aid training (MHFA). There are lots of MHFA training options available in the Northern Rivers, but very few PFA ones. CCR PFA has been offered at the following locations as of June 2023: Brunswick Heads (2), Lismore (3), Murwillumbah (3), Main Arm (2), Ballina (3), Casino (1), Kyogle (1).



Photos: First Aid training is undertaken for Plan C by Pacific Coast First Aid from Byron Bay.

- **Connecting via an online network**

After consulting CCRs on which online platform would be most useful, Plan C created the CCR Network Whatsapp group, containing 5 groups with 121 participants. Groups include: 1. 'Training, events, resources and opportunities'; 2. 'Announcements'; 3. 'In case of disaster or crisis'; 4. Friendly chat among CCRs and a location specific group 5. 'Good Folk Greater Uki CCRs'. There are 215 members of the private Facebook group "Northern Rivers Community Carers and Responders Network" (as of June 2023).



Northern Rivers Community Carers and Responders Network

- **Momentum maintained via the on-going sharing of experiences and ideas among CCRs**

Momentum has been sustained for on-going sharing of experiences and ideas amongst CCRs through obtaining a separate grant for a 'Facing Up' series which aims to explore what it means to live in the midst of climate and ecological crises. 'Facing Up, How do we live in the midst of the climate and ecological crisis?' is a series of trauma-informed conversations that focus on the social, economic, cultural, political, emotional and spiritual consequences of the ecological crisis.

In a series of public conversations, held monthly from March to November 2023, some of Australia's leading thinkers consider our place in a rapidly transformed world, and how we might think, feel and act in ways that are grounded, empowering and life-affirming. CCRs volunteer at the events. In fact the decorations for two events were created through a workshop for CCRs beforehand on the topic of art therapy.



Photo: A 'Facing Up' event at the Brunswick Picture House



Photo: An art therapy workshop

- **A mentoring program was developed based on the local 'Sourdough Business Pathways' mentoring model**

Plan C staff as well as experienced CCRs provided guidance to other CCRs, to help them lead a project that builds the resilience of their own community. 30 CCRs were mentored so far, and this activity continues. The focus of the mentoring sessions varied as they were dictated by the need of the mentee, and included topics such as group governance strengthening, fundraising and grant applications, developing partnerships with other organisations, media relations, lobbying of local, state and Federal governments on issues related to resilience and recovery, disaster preparedness and individual and community wellbeing.

Appendix 2. CCR case studies

CASE STUDY: LINKING CCRS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS - Together Pottsville example

In 2021 Mel Crowe felt a degree of eco-anxiety and a desire to find out more about what she could do to address the problems she was conscious of. She initially undertook a 'Think Resilience' course online (by the Post Carbon Institute) and participants were encouraged to link up with existing groups in their local area, but Mel found there weren't any that were resilience or sustainability focused in Pottsville. *"I had some initial discussions with Jean REnouf from Resilient Byron and some time later our group decided on the name 'Together Pottsville'"* says Mel.

Together Pottsville is now a member of the Tweed Council's Community Resilience Network. *"Having our CRT members attend the CCR training has been really useful"* Mel reflects. The CCR training is also being put to use. *"I found the non-violent communication (NVC) exercises fantastic and valuable in so many ways"*. Mel put the NVC training into practice straight away for communicating with community members.

The CCR training has also enabled connections and support across community hubs in the region, with Together Pottsville being in touch on a regular basis with Resilient Uki. *"We weren't clear on whether we would go through the process of becoming incorporated at*

Resilience seemed to be doom and gloom so initially Together Pottsville started with a sustainability theme, including recycling coffee cups and rubbish clean ups (see photo). Mel reached out to Jean as a mentor where she found out about the CCR course. The CCR program subsequently helped identify members of the community who might be willing to help. *“I think that 70-80% of the value of the CCR program has been linking to the wider network of people across the Northern Rivers and in my local area” says Mel. “I attended the CCR training and met others from my local area through the CCR training. That's when we joined forces under Together Pottsville.”*

Mel linked up with other community groups in Pottsville who agreed to create a Community Resilience Team with the assistance of Red Cross and the Regional Emergency Management Officer who happened to live in the area.

CASE STUDY: BETTER ABLE TO RESPOND TO FUTURE BUSHFIRE EVENTS - UKI

Resilient Uki have received UHF radios from Resilience NSW to improve communications in disaster. They've also created community hub response processes and gathered equipment such as a generator for the Uki Hall, medical supplies and an emergency water filtration system. Resilient Uki is also administering a mental health recovery grant from Healthy North Coast. They have a grant from the Northern Rivers Community Foundation for a disaster preparedness shipping container. *“We're also working in clusters of houses to do fire preparedness plans and identify triggers for evacuating in floods. We also do it with a whole*

Together Pottsville, but Mel from Resilient Uki told us that it wasn't that hard. So that gave us the confidence to do it and it was a crucial moment”.

Photo: Together Pottsville are working on numerous resilience and environment related initiatives. In this example they coordinated a Clean Up Australia day event.



“Since the CCR training, I've received a grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal for bringing the Koonyum range community hubs together - from the Channon to Uki for a knowledge sharing workshop. Jean from Plan C is assisting us bring that together through mentoring” says Mel. It will involve people who have been CCR trained, as well as those supporting their communities prepare for and recover from bushfire and flood disasters.

bunch of fun and frivolity. We are agile, diverse, and responsive” says Mel, CCR and mentee. Beyond Resilient Uki, Mel is also facilitating learning across community hubs in similar hill country.



Photo: Gathering of Uki Neighbourhood leaders together to discuss alternative communications and mapping.

CASE STUDY: MAIN ARM DISASTER RECOVERY ASSOCIATION RECOVERING FROM AND PREPARING FOR DISASTERS

Shortly after the immediate flood response in March 2022, Richard Hughes knew the recovery was going to be long and difficult and that Main Arm would need some sort of association, a not for profit, to liaise with agencies and providers of help through the recovery period. *“We were keen to get it started, we had a meeting down at the hall, so we formed a committee, paid the fees, and off we went. We have all been really busy, so busy”* says Richard who attended the CCR training in early 2023. Believing that affected communities have a right to input into discussions about the decisions that affect them, the Main Arm Disaster Recovery Association (MADR) has liaised with agencies and organisations since the event. Wendy Brown, also a MADR committee member and trained CCR says *“we’re getting respect with Council. Not a day goes by without getting 3-4 phone calls a day to check in with what’s going on and what we need”*. Wendy also slept at the community hall for the first 28 days post-disaster to help coordinate the community response.



Photo: The Main Arm Disaster Recovery Association hosted the Byron Community Resilience Network meeting on July 25 at the Main Arm Community Centre.

The upper branches of the Brunswick River flow through the narrow Main Arm valley and the river system took a beating during the 2022 floods. *“There was so much flood debris and waste that ended up in the river. It was overwhelming for all of our community to witness this every day. Whilst trying to function and get back to work or school, driving past having to see car bodies and so much wreckage was definitely a trigger I felt we needed to address”*. Wendy became the community

liaison with the Environmental Protection Authority and consultants to make the waste removal program work. *"It was a huge role to undertake but needed community trust to ensure that it ran as smoothly as possible."* says Wendy.



Photo: Wendy Brown (left), trained CCR and MADR committee member at a community fun day coordinated by Main Arm Disaster Recovery Association at the Kohinur Hall in August 2023. One of the many landslides that occurred in the valley is evident behind.

Even now, 17 months after the flood and devastating landslides ripped through the Main Arm valley, Richard and his family are unable to access their property. MADR have launched a NSW Parliamentary petition, seeking funding to the full extent pledged by the New South Wales government, calling for updated flood maps to reflect the 2022 floods and requesting inclusive decision making from the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Authority. *"Our target is to hit 10,000 signatures so that the voice of the Northern Rivers community is heard loud and clear in the NSW Parliament"* said Richard in a recent interview with the Echo newspaper.

Having experienced fires and floods in recent years, the CCRs at MADR know that there is usually a 3-5 day window when they're on their own post-disaster, so they're asking themselves what they can do as a community to ensure safety in that window when combat agencies can't physically get to them. They've created the idea of 'ranger stations', with a ranger and second in charge allocated for each section of the valley that becomes fragmented in a disaster. *"That's the sexy bit of what we do, the structure evolved organically during the floods"* says Dave, another MADR committee member and CCR. Since the floods, the community created a list of essential preparedness items and successfully applied for a grant from the Northern Rivers Community Foundation. They now have Starlink communications at the community hall, portable communications in backpacks, and Eperb devices. They also established a sponsorship deal with Bunnings in Byron Bay which has allowed them to purchase flood lights and torches. In its process of upskilling community members for future disasters, MADR has adopted the CCR training as an accreditation. *"If they want to be a ranger in the area, they have to be trained"* says Dave.

CASE STUDY: SOUTH GOLDEN BEACH DISASTER RECOVERY.

The South Golden Beach/New Brighton/Ocean Shores Community Resilience Team received a grant from the Byron Council to hold a series of community connection events for flood affected communities in the three villages. A 'Music in the Gardens' event was held in partnership with the Shara Community Gardens in May 2023, with live music, a food van and kids activities. Three CCRs were on the organising committee. The event was really well attended with positive feedback on how much people valued coming together for something that wasn't disaster related (but of course many conversations were had about where people were at on their recovery journey!).

Shara Community Gardens - South Golden Beach/North Ocean Shores
7 May · 🌍

A fabulous afternoon had by young and old at Shara Community Gardens - South Golden Beach/North Ocean Shores event Music in the Gardens.

Thanks to our wonderful musicians Kelly Brouhaha and Phil & Tilley, and yummy food from Lotus Food van. Thanks for the generous support of Byron Shire Council and NSW Government in sponsoring the event.

Thanks for all the community love from donations and plant sales that will help us pay the bills to keep this great garden and meeting p... See more



CASE STUDY ON CCRS ASSISTING FLOOD AFFECTED MEMBERS OF THE LISMORE COMMUNITY:

“In the past, I worked on human rights and gender based violence around the world. I always struggled with inequality and violence against women. When I did the CCR, I wanted to run women's circles - which is what I offered at the Northern Rivers Healing hub. The active hope section of the training really helped me. Especially where it acknowledges how hard it is to confront these issues. The way it honours the grief about what's going on, but also what happens through you to address it, identifying your talents and skills in the 'Think global, act local' mindset. I am passionate about empowerment of women. I noticed that women's circles in Byron were expensive and everyone was dressed up. I wanted to make sure they were accessible to everyone.

The purpose of the women's circles is for women to recognise their nobility. They are 1 hour, and involve a guided meditation at the beginning and then explore a topic - it could be self care, boundaries, grief. I do some research on the topic before hand and share it and then we have a conversation about it - including what their wisdom is on the topic. It is essentially a sharing circle checking in on people to see how everyone is. Some of the women were really flood affected and didn't know where to go to socialise. We do meditations around people loving themselves. In the organisation I was volunteering for it was a way of checking in on them and referring them to broader flood service providers” Clara - Lismore

CASE STUDY: IMPLEMENTATION OF CCR IS USED TO DESIGN FUTURE PROJECTS

Based on the observation that youth played a pivotal role in flood response, were often left out of recovery initiatives and discussions, and made up a very small percentage of CCRS, Plan C aimed to create a youth pilot program. Funding was crowdsourced in May-July 2023 and matched by a donor. A pilot for Young CCR training is currently in the process of being created.

MEET ZALI, 21



Upper Main Arm Community Recovery Leader

"When the floods first hit, I felt totally helpless and didn't know how to pitch in. CCR training would've given me the skills to confidently jump into action from the get-go. We made it through this time, but next time - and there will be a next time - we must be better prepared."