

Local Responses to Disasters – Local Communities Responding in NSW

Conference Paper – Brendan Delaney, ANGLICARE Sydney

Today's workshop is going to focus on the possible ways that Anglicare organisation's can assist following 'disasters' or an 'event', and we will do this by looking at what happens as a result of a disaster and the impacts they can have – leading us to consider different ways we can respond.

This will also include looking at 'why' we should respond!

What are disasters?

Many types of events – floods, fires, earthquakes, land-slips, train derailments, man-made, pandemics...all fall into the category of 'disasters'.

Individuals, families and whole communities can be affected by an 'event', and as seen in the Victorian bushfires, whole regions can be affected by an event.

A definition of a 'disaster' is – *when an extreme and unexpected event affects people and communities.*

So why do we in ANGLICARE get involved when there is a disaster?

Jesus preached His message – not just to His disciples – but to everyone:

- the sick, suffering and the old and young
- to the 'wrong crowd' – those that were frowned upon at that time – like the Samaritan woman at the well, the likes of Mary Magdalene, the tax collectors like Zaccheus...

Jesus' message was to all people.

Have a look at the following statements:

- *To provide opportunities for people and communities to change their lives, and to advocate for social justice...*
- *...exists to create a more just society by expressing God's love through service, education and advocacy...*
- *...is part of the Anglican Church and is a distinctively Christian agency and exists, in the name of Christ, to love and serve this community...*
- *Lives changing and communities growing by care through Jesus Christ...*
- *To work in partnership with the community, families and individuals to promote the enrichment of relationships, fullness of life and social*

justice for all...Jesus said "I have come so that you may have life, and have it in fullness" (John 10:10)

- *To create a more caring, just and inclusive society consistent with the teachings of Christ...*
- *We believe that providing services to the elderly is our Christian mission, and that Christian faith and love must be reflected in the quality of care and hospitality services we provide...*
- *Our values incorporate Love...Hope...Compassion...Integrity/Trust...Respect...*
- *... on behalf of the Anglican Church, expresses God's love for individuals, families and communities by:*
 - *Making a positive difference to quality of life*
 - *Responding to needs and issues in ways which enhance and protect dignity and integrity*
 - *Promoting social justice.*

What do you think you just read?

These are examples of the Vision, Mission statements or the stated Values of some of the Australian and NZ Anglicare agencies (hopefully you might have recognised your own organisation's statement amongst all of them!)

*'A new command I give you:
Love one another.
As I have loved you, so you must love one another.'
(John 13:34)*

Jesus clearly instructed us what we need to do.

As Christians we see the act of responding to disasters as part of our role – as a ministry work that we can do when people are in need.

Through this response we are able to demonstrate in practical ways the reality of Christ's love – whatever the circumstances may be.

These events create unique opportunities for Christians to respond with compassion, touching the lives of those affected with love and care in Christ's name at a time of great need and vulnerability.

So what is Disaster Recovery?

'Recovery is an enabling and supporting process which allows individuals, families, and communities to attain a proper level of functioning, through the provision of information, support and resources.'

This is an internationally-accepted definition of disaster recovery and gives a clear picture of what the process is all about.

So – what happens to individuals and communities when an 'event' occurs and what areas do they generally need assistance in?

The following information relates more to a large event but provides a detailed overview of the types of assistance and supports that are needed.

Immediate Needs (0-2 days):

- Clothing, Food, Shelter
- Factual information on the disaster site (homes)
- Location of family members, and what is being done to trace missing persons
- Evacuation, when, why, where and for how long
- When will the disaster site be safe enough to return to
- Transportation - Private cars/ petrol vouchers Transport to evacuation site
- How will they be evacuated
- Protection of Property
- Information on what is available to help people resume a "normal" life
- Emergency health services - first aid / medical services
- Communication - relatives and the outside community
- Counsellors/ Social Workers/ Clergy
- Knowledge of Government plans, for people and the area
- Baby health services
- Crisis Service - advice, emergency funds
- Pet Care
- Toiletries, Bathing, Toilets and Laundry facilities
- Voluntary Workers to help clean-up site
- Interpreters

Medium Term Needs (2-14 days):

- Clothing; Food; Accommodation
- Information on what is available to help people begin to make their recovery. What will be done? By whom?
- Safety of the Disaster Site, can they return?
- Health Services - dental, hearing aids and glasses
- Preventative health services: immunisation, disposal of garbage, sanitation
- Protection of property
- Interpreting Services
- Funerals
- Geriatric and Pediatrics care
- Volunteers to clean-up
- Employment
- Contact relatives in other areas to inform them of the situation
- Family allowances;
- Hire-Purchase, mortgages
- Compensation, banking

- Donations
- Day Care Centre
- Community groups being formed
- Legal Aid
- Recreation - hostels and caravan parks cause frustration and tension which must be released
- Teenagers, recreation educational support
- Baby products/ toiletries/ other necessities
- Cooking equipment, household furniture
- Education
- Pet Care
- Communication links to the outside world

Long Term Needs (14 days+)

- Insurance/ Legal Aid
- Rebuilding information
- Clothing/ Food
- Financial Assistance
- Accommodation - how long can they stay where they are, other arrangements
- Recreation
- Health Services
- Employment/ Unemployment
- Interpreter Services
- Information regarding the situation at the disaster site for evacuees relocated in other areas
- Education/ Child care
- Peoples "rights" in obtaining grants
- Government policies regarding Assistance
- Future planning information, what the Government and other organisations are doing for recovery
- Counselling, families or individual
- Sports equipment, games and toys to keep the children occupied
- Activities for the children after school
- Home/ Business/ Farm repair and maintenance
- Moving assistance/Property clean-up and protection

Looking at the above lists, you can see that there is a significant amount of *'information, resources and support'* that is needed by those individuals and communities that are affected by disasters.

These are all things that we tend to take for granted as *'being there/available'* – then suddenly they're not or they are things that are now needed because of what's happened.

So where does this type and level of assistance come from?

Governments have the responsibility to look after and manage disasters as part of their role.

Across Australia, the responsibility has been passed down from the federal government to the States and Territories, although the federal government sets the directions and expectations for them to follow.

A question - how many volunteers do you think are involved in emergency management activities across Australia?

Approximately 500,000 volunteers are involved in the emergency management sector!

...and if the governments had to pay for the work that these volunteers do – how much do you think it would be worth?

\$12 billion dollars a year!

This is a CONSERVATIVE estimate based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data from 2005 and surveys conducted by the Australian Emergency Management Volunteers Forum (AEMVF).

In general, governments do not have the funds to support this level of service so they rely heavily on the volunteer environment to provide the manpower and services when needed.

So let's look at who provides services in the event of an emergency?

'Combat Agencies' – those organisations that are the 'bells and whistles' of the system who provide the 'front line' services that are aimed at protecting and/or saving lives and property – are the major organisations involved in providing services in an emergency. These are usually the Police, Fire Services – both metropolitan and rural – and State Emergency Services (SES) – interestingly, even some of those rely heavily on volunteers to be able to perform this function (SES, CFA, RFS, etc).

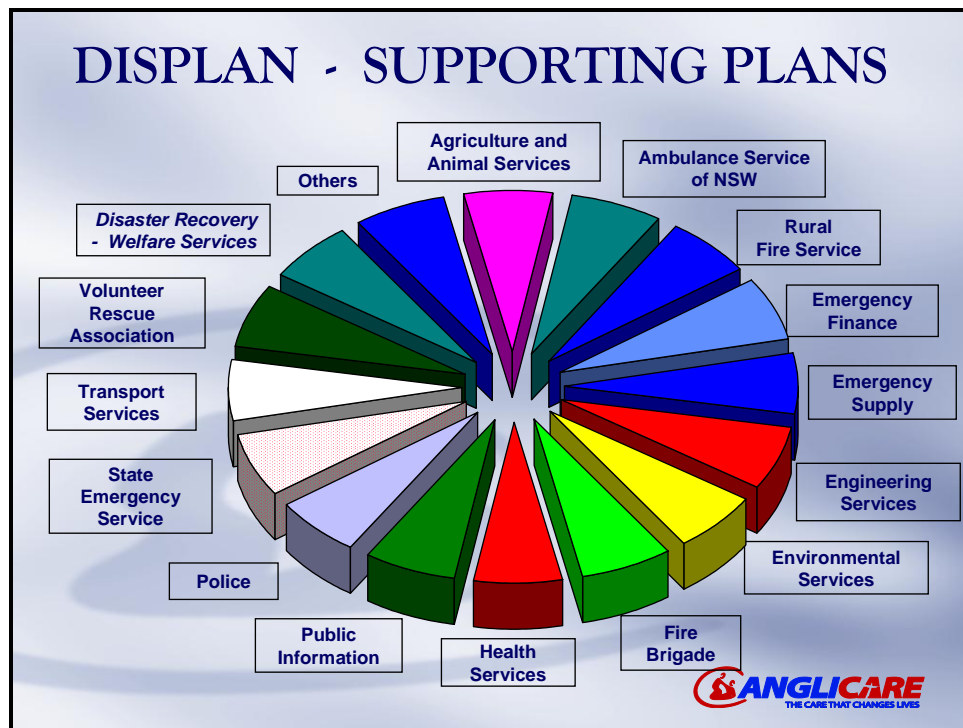
But if you think back on what the needs of communities are and the impacts of events, you realise that the combat agencies are only at the beginning of the process, and there are a significant number of organisations that need to be involved in the response and recovery phase of a disaster.

Let's look at the process in NSW as this is where ANGLICARE has a significant involvement in a 'formalised' process – and it's what I know!!!

Responding to emergencies in NSW

This is done under State Government legislation. Through this legislation, the NSW State Disaster Plan – DISPLAN – was developed.

As you can see below, this contains a number of plans that detail how each of the areas will respond and manage the process in the event of an emergency occurring.



'Combat Agencies' have their specific plans – Police, Fire, SES, etc - and the remaining plans are what are known as 'Functional Area' plans.

The **Welfare Services** plan is the section that ANGLICARE currently works under in NSW.

When an event occurs, decisions are made as to what components of DISPLAN are activated, and therefore who will become involved in the response and/or recovery process.

If the Welfare Services are required because people and/or communities are impacted (which is often the case), then the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) are brought in and they are then responsible for implementing the relevant sections of the Welfare Services Functional Area plan – dependent upon the size, scope and impact of the event at hand.

Within the Welfare Services Functional plan, there are six Participating Organisation's – including DoCS – and a large number of other Supporting Organisation's who are generally government departments (both State and

Federal) that may be called upon – particularly during the longer ‘recovery’ phase following the initial ‘response’ stage of the event. This becomes clear when you think about the areas of assistance needed from 14+ days as noted previously.

DISASTER RECOVERY - WELFARE SERVICES FUNCTIONAL AREA

COORDINATOR
Department of Community Services

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

- Department of Community Services
- Salvation Army
- ADRA
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Red Cross NSW
- ANGLICARE





SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

- Other community and service organisations
- Government Departments as required, eg
 - Health
 - Primary Industries
 - Centrelink
 - Housing
 - Others



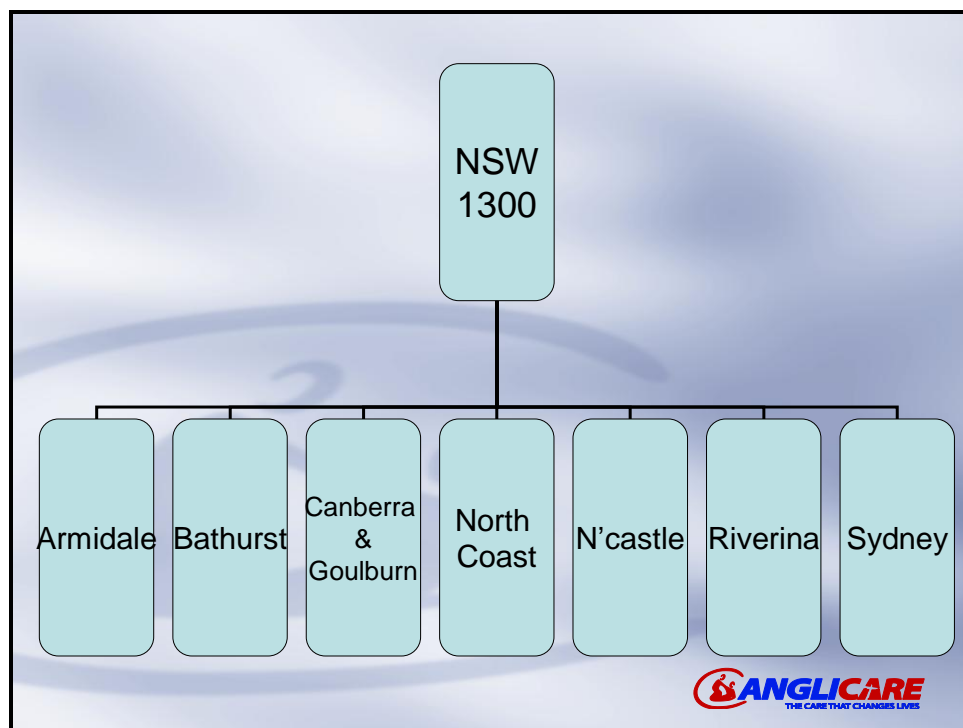
The six Participating Organisations that come under the Welfare Services Functional Area plan are all signatories to a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ (MoU) that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each organisation and how the process operates.

MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING

| | |
|---|--|
|  | DoCS coordinates the Disaster Recovery – Welfare Services Plan and provides financial assistance |
|  | Red Cross provides personal support, and often assists the Police with Disaster Victim Registration |
|  | ADRA coordinates the provision of accommodation for people affected by a disaster as well as for workers |
|  | The Salvation Army provides food for people affected by a disaster as well as workers |
|  | The St Vincent de Paul Society provides clothing and personal requisites to people affected by a disaster |
|  | ANGLICARE provides support to DoCS and the Participating Organisations as needed |



How does ANGLICARE operate under this MoU in NSW?



The Anglican Church in NSW is divided into seven dioceses, and within each diocese is an Anglicare organisation that operates independently of the others.

Each of these dioceses and Anglicare organisations has a 'disaster recovery' capability and has a Regional Disaster Recovery Coordinator who is responsible for the activities in that diocese. The overall process across NSW is coordinated by ANGLICARE Sydney who represents all seven agencies/dioceses at a state level with the NSW government and other relevant organisations and committees.

NSW currently has just under 1300 people who have been trained as 'disaster recovery' volunteers and who are attached to teams throughout the seven dioceses. With the training and associated accreditation, these volunteers are able to attend evacuation and recovery centres when requested to by DoCS and assist as per the roles and responsibilities set out in the MoU with the NSW government.

To better understand the role of ANGLICARE and how it works, let's do some homework revision...

Major fires were experienced in the southern suburbs of Sydney during the summer of 1994 and the Anglican Clergy found it difficult to be involved to

assist and support the local communities as they were not "...part of the emergency response process" under the NSW DISPLAN.

As a result, the then Archbishop of the Sydney Diocese instigated the thought process that helped to set the direction of things to come.

"The call to do good to all men is not only a responsibility, but is also a way of building bridges to those whom are yet to hear of Christ. To touch the lives of others with kindness and generosity is to copy our Heavenly Father. It also opens the doors for meaningful communication. For both reasons, can we have a fresh focus on raising our capacity to serve those around us in a caring way."
Archbishop R.H. Goodhew

The following steps occurred:

- Synod gave direction to ANGLICARE Sydney to investigate how the Anglican Community could 'become involved'
- This involved considerable period of discussions and negotiations between ANGLICARE Sydney and NSW DoCS to identify roles and resource needs and how Anglicare across NSW could fit into the existing model – resulting in the current MoU
- By 1998 the 'Emergency Services' section was established and the Anglican response was developed from there
- What is now known as 'Disaster Recovery' was established across NSW and involved the development of training and support services for both 'peace time' and 'operational' periods
- Started out as a 'Supporting Agency' and then became a "Participating Agency' alongside the other NFP/NGO's already in the system.

This process for Anglicare in NSW is managed through the activities of the *Provincial Community Services Commission (PCSC)*.

Each region is represented on the PCSC by the CEO or Chair or delegated representative of the relevant Anglicare organisation, and this allows for decisions to be made and resources to be committed as needed.

The PCSC provides the forum for discussion of all disaster recovery-related activities and to identify regional/area specific issues that need to be managed – this forum also provides the opportunity to discuss other service areas that are across all regions - not just disaster recovery activities.

So what does this mean for Anglicare's role?

As noted previously, the role provided by the Anglicare NSW volunteers is that of 'general support'. This requires Anglicare NSW to provide the additional people resources to assist the other four Participating Organisations and DoCS to provide their designated service when they do not have the volunteers available as required.

This requires the Anglicare NSW volunteers to be trained in the activities of each of the other organisations as each request for our assistance may be different – dependent upon which organisation(s) Anglicare NSW is required to assist at the time.

The Anglican community has approximately 1100 churches across NSW. No other organisation – faith based or not – can provide that level of coverage across NSW. As a result, through the Anglican community, Anglicare NSW is in the position of being able to have teams of volunteers across all of NSW – this situation would be similar across all states/territories of Australia.

This enables Anglicare NSW to be able to provide teams of volunteers in most areas – we maintain a process of ongoing recruitment activities – to ensure that we are able to provide assistance at times when it is most needed.

The question that each state and territory needs to consider is how do they want to be involved in a disaster recovery process within their own jurisdiction?

As part of this, you need to consider the range of services – and therefore the expertise, skills and resources – that your Anglicare organisations have and combine that with the existing links that you have with the Anglican Community and local churches.

While Anglicare NSW may have a 'formal' system in place to provide disaster recovery services and assistance to local churches and communities during events, these processes need not be a part of a larger external 'formal emergency management response' process that comes under a state-based emergency response system.

What does all this mean?

An Anglicare response to disasters does not need to be part of a government-driven response.

A choice to go down a 'formal' response path can be taken, with the end result likely being that the role performed is a very 'managed and directed' role – but nevertheless still meeting the command given us by Jesus (as is currently the case in NSW) and in line with our Vision and Mission.

A choice to go down an 'informal' response path will provide another opportunity for Anglicare to work closely with local churches to identify local needs and look at ways of meeting those needs during times of emergencies and disasters (as is currently done by many Anglicare organisations in conjunction with local church communities).

Doing both is also an option!

Being a part of a formal process brings legitimacy and respect to the work done and the opportunity for the 'secular' world to see the 'church in action' – doing what churches are there to do in spreading God's love and compassion to those who most need it!

We also see that in many – if not most – cases that a 'formal government-driven' response process occurs as necessary, but that this will finish at some stage and local communities will still need ongoing information, resources, support *and* spiritual help into the future.

This is when the local church community, the diocese and Anglicare can continue to work together to meet the needs of the local community.

This 'informal process' would be driven by a combination of what is needed by the community and the available skills and resource capabilities of the local church and what support can be provided by Anglicare.

The relationship with the local churches is the vital ingredient to this being of benefit and successful for the needs of the community.

So what does this mean from a biblical perspective?

*"This then is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in Him?
Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."*

1 John 3:16-18

This practical and operational support in the midst of an emergency is aimed at maximising our ability to respond effectively in emergencies and to demonstrate, in practical ways, the reality of Christ's love - whatever the circumstances. Major emergencies create unique opportunities for Christians to respond with compassion, touching the lives of those affected with love and care in Christ's name at a time of great need and vulnerability.

This remains the same irrespective of whether we follow a formal or informal process.

We asked the question at the start – why do we do this work?

A great man I know said this... *We do what we do because we are Christians and we care. Jesus commands us in the gospels that believers must be both gospel-focused and mercy-minded.*

...but a far greater one said this...

'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'.

(Matthew 25:45)

However and whichever way we provide this service, it is a ministry role:

- A Ministry of help to victims in a practical hands-on fashion
- A Ministry of spiritual growth and faith in action to those who want to be of service to others
- A Ministry of the outreach of the Gospel

So what could you be doing from now?

- Consider what you are currently doing and how it is done
- Find out about your jurisdictional processes for responding to disasters
- Determine potential role for your organisation into the future
- Use existing Anglican networks & relationships to determine what you could do
- Establish leadership
- Develop formal relationships – Govt & NGO as required
- Develop training & management resources
- Implement the ministry
- Grab the opportunity

The first 3 points are obviously the priority for determining what – if anything – you want to do as an organisation within your region/jurisdiction.

ANGLICARE Sydney is happy to assist you in looking at this opportunity further and assisting in any planning you wish to take down this path.

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