

Media Release

Friday, 13 October 2023

HAWKESBURY COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS HELPING REDUCE DISASTER RISKS

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) is inviting Hawkesbury community organisations and local services to engage with a new disaster preparedness project in the region.

With a forecasted hot, dry summer approaching, NCOSS has appointed Peppercorn Services Inc. as the host service for the Community Sector Disaster Capability project to help reduce the impacts of future disasters on vulnerable communities in the Hawkesbury.

The aim of the project is to build a more collaborative approach to disaster risk reduction, working with vulnerable communities and non-government organisations to strengthen links between community organisations and emergency management agencies.

Peppercorn Services is a well-known and respected community service provider, which has been active in the ongoing recovery after recent floods.

“This project is an opportunity to find out what the barriers are to local services preparing for disasters and what can be done to address that,” Peppercorn CEO, Jess Innes said.

“Every organisation and community member is at a different point in this journey, depending on who they’ve connected with and how they were impacted.”

Key community stakeholders with an interest in community emergency response, recovery, preparedness, and ongoing support, are being consulted about their experience of recent disasters.

Bligh Park Community Services are partnering with Peppercorn to deliver the project.

A launch breakfast is being held with community stakeholders on Thursday 26th October 2023. The launch will provide information on the role of government agencies in disasters, discuss disaster risks and service gaps from the perspective of local services and groups, and explore ways to collaborate in the future to build resilience in the Hawkesbury community.

NCOSS CEO Joanna Quilty has welcomed the engagement of Peppercorn and Bligh Park Community Services to deliver the project.

“We know that certain communities and population groups – people with disability, those who are homeless or in precarious housing, older people – are more vulnerable and will be most impacted by disasters,” Ms Quilty said.

“But too often, these communities and the local organisations who support them are not involved in the early stages of disaster management, and subsequently not well included as part of the ongoing recovery.

“If the community sector is better included in planning for disasters, preventative action can be taken to reduce risks, such as working together to ensure everyone is prepared and has a plan.

“Better involvement of social service organisations should also improve communication and coordination during and after disasters.”

NCOSS is partnering with AbSec and the Local Community Services Association to deliver the Community Sector Disaster Capability project in three locations - Southern NSW, the Northern Rivers as well as the Hawkesbury.

Friday 13th October is International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction with the focus on ‘Fighting inequality for a resilient future’.

This project is funded through the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF) which is jointly funded by the Australian and New South Wales Governments.

DRRF projects are targeted at locally led initiatives to help keep communities safe in the future.

The DRRF has three funding streams and offers \$52 million in total to build resilience and help reduce, mitigate and manage the risks of future disasters.

The Community Sector Disaster Capability project is funded under the DRRF Local & Regional Risk Reduction stream, which aims to deliver direct risk reduction and risk mitigation solutions, build capabilities in disaster risk reduction, and promote collaboration between local communities, councils and other stakeholders.

Find out more about the project at: www.ncoss.org.au/disaster-capability/

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