



ROUNDTABLE CHAMPIONS BETTER-PROTECTED COMMUNITIES ON U.N. DAY FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safer Communities says Australia remains one of the most vulnerable nations to natural disasters despite being one of the world's most developed countries.

In the wake of years of unprecedented and devastating natural disasters across the globe, the Roundtable used the United Nations International Day for Disaster Reduction to continue their calls for national investment in disaster resilience and preventative activities.

Speaking on behalf of the Roundtable, Insurance Australia Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Mr Mike Wilkins said Australia has more work to do if it is to protect its people and economy from natural disasters in ways other nations had.

"While the UN Day for Disaster Reduction is about celebrating how people and communities are reducing their exposure to disasters, we need to acknowledge just how far we have to go to better protect our communities.

"We need to continue to champion the issue of natural disaster resilience to ensure the impact of the recent events that have made us a nation known for natural disasters is lessened.

"With the Roundtable's evidence based policy and the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements, we have a real opportunity to implement a long term approach that will save lives and reduce the unsustainable impact on our economy," Mr Wilkins said.

Destruction from natural disasters is on the rise, currently costing \$6.3 billion annually in Australia and due to material growth and urbanisation, is projected to rise to \$23 billion by 2050¹.

In 1974, in what was then the worst year for natural disasters on record, damage for New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria was put at \$2.9 billion. The estimated costs for the 2011 Queensland flood disaster exceeded this figure for the state alone with damage to local government infrastructure put at \$2 billion, and total damage to public infrastructure up to \$6 billion².

Andrew Coghlan, National Manager, Emergency Services, Australian Red Cross said he was pleased to hold a spotlight on the impact of natural disasters.

"As we enter storm, cyclone and bushfire season we may yet again see national attention on communities who are impacted by disastrous weather events.

But we need to act before these disasters occur, to continue to reduce the social and economic impacts of natural disasters through a collaborative national approach," Mr Coghlan said.

The Roundtable was recently recognised by the United Nations, winning the prestigious United Nations Sasakawa Award for Risk Reduction at the Third UN World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan. The award recognises the role that strategic partnerships can play in elevating prevention and resilience in tackling the impact of natural disasters.

The Roundtable has previously identified that through the consolidation of current mitigation spend and the centralisation of new investments, long term taxpayer savings could be generated. For example carefully targeted investment of \$250 million per year would reduce Australian Government expenditure on natural disaster relief and recovery by more than 50% - generating budgetary savings of \$12.2 billion by 2050.

Roundtable research also shows that improved access to information and better quality and efficiency of research could generate a potential additional saving of up to 20% on top of the \$12.2 billion first identified in the Roundtable's White Paper, 'Building our Nation's Resilience to Natural Disasters'³.



In total, Australia could potentially save up to \$14.6 billion by 2050 through regular well planned investments.

“We need to invest more in mitigation to save lives, protect our communities and strengthen our economies. Prevention is always better than the cure,” Mr Coghlan added.

The Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities was set up in 2012 to support a coordinated national approach to making communities more resilient.

It brings together six leading CEOs to influence public policy on the unsustainable cost of disasters on life, property and the economy.

It has two new projects due for completion early next year. They build on earlier work of the Roundtable to improve Australia’s resilience to natural disasters and will provide the first ever framework to measure the economic consequences of the long-term social impact of natural disasters on the Australian community, and establish practical and concrete guidelines for the design and build of future infrastructure.

The Roundtable members are the Chief Executive Officers of the Australian Red Cross, Insurance Australia Group, Investa Office, Munich Re, Optus and Westpac.

For more information: www.australianbusinessroundtable.com.au

About the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safer Communities:

The Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities was set up in 2012 to support a coordinated national approach to making communities more resilient. It brings together six leading CEOs to influence public policy via evidence-based reporting on the unsustainable cost of disasters on life, property and the economy.

The Roundtable members are the Chief Executive Officers of the Australian Red Cross, Insurance Australia Group, Investa Office, Munich Re, Optus and Westpac. Members of the Roundtable champion the need for a sustainable, coordinated national approach to make communities more resilient and people safer. They believe that national investment in disaster resilience and preventative activities is the most effective way to protect communities and reduce the impact of disasters.

The **United Nation’s International Day for Disaster Reduction** is a day to celebrate how people and communities are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of DRR. The theme for 2015 will focus on the use of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge.

<http://www.unisdr.org/2015/iddr/>

Media contact:

Amanda Wallace

M 0422 379 964

E amanda.wallace@iag.com.au

Footnotes

1. *Building our Nation’s Resilience to Natural Disasters*, Deloitte Access Economics, 2013
2. Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist, ‘What are the Consequences of Floods?’, available from <http://www.chiefscientist.qld.gov.au/publications/understanding-floods/flood-consequences> (Oct 2015)
3. *Building an Open Platform for Natural Disaster Decisions*, Deloitte Access Economics 2014