



NEW APPROACH TO DATA AND RESEARCH CRITICAL TO PROTECTING LIVES AND PROPERTY

An open source platform providing access to critical information on natural disasters to all Australians is needed to protect life and property, and will help deliver potential savings to the Australian economy of \$500 million to \$2.4 billion.

The *Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safer Communities* today launched its latest report '*Building an Open Platform for Natural Disaster Resilience Decisions*,' which calls for open access to critical data and research.

It states that it is imperative that communities, businesses, governments and individuals have access to the latest research founded on accurate data to enable more informed decisions on how best to build property and infrastructure and protect communities from the impact of natural disasters.

The report recommends a national open platform be developed by the Australian Government to provide a single point of access to critical data. The recommendation is consistent with the Australian Government's Declaration of Open Government of 2010, which recognises the importance of making government information more accessible and usable through the innovative use of technology.

According to the report, a large number of government, university and business organisations make valuable contributions to natural disaster research in Australia yet crucial data can be difficult and costly to access, incomplete, duplicated or not suitable for its different users, which increases the vulnerability of our communities to natural disasters.

'*Building an Open Platform for Natural Disaster Resilience Decisions*' makes three recommendations:

- Efficiency and openness: **develop a national open platform that centralises key data so all Australians have access to information that's critical to protecting homes and property.** This would include data such as information on flood elevation, the location of assets, the resilience of building materials and long-term weather patterns.
- Transparency and availability: **provide greater transparency by removing restrictive barriers on accessing data and research** by standardising research and addressing concerns such as unnecessary restrictive licensing.
- Effective decision-making: **establish a framework for prioritising investment in resilience.** Building on a common understanding of the nation's areas of highest risk would help prioritise the research agenda.

Australian communities are at risk. They are exposed to many natural disasters, including storms, cyclones, floods, bushfires and earthquakes. These disasters have devastating impacts on homes, critical infrastructure and the natural environment leaving communities dealing with loss of life, injury and longer-term social, community and psychological costs.

Last year the Roundtable released a White Paper '*Building our Nation's Resilience to Natural Disasters*' which estimated that the economic cost of natural disasters in Australia would rise to \$23 billion annually by 2050, up from the current cost of \$6.3 billion a year. The Paper demonstrated that carefully targeted resilience investments of \$250 million per annum would reduce the cost of natural disasters by more than 50% and generate economic savings of \$12.2 billion by 2050.



Today's report shows that critical to achieving such savings is the consolidation of existing information, the commissioning of additional research and the delivery of information in an open accessible format.

This fresh approach could lead to a significant increase in savings beyond those identified in the Roundtable's first paper. The approach would enable better local responses from governments, businesses and communities and generate additional potential economic savings of between \$500 million and \$2.4 billion over the period to 2050. Total savings from well planned mitigation investments could increase to between \$12.7 billion and \$14.6 billion over the same period.

Notably, the research report shows that, of an estimated \$280 million allocated by governments to natural disaster research from 2009 to 2021, the majority of research funds are allocated to disaster response and recovery rather than mitigation solutions that will help save lives and property.

The report also reveals disproportionate research spend on some disaster types, such as bushfires, with little or no spend on others. Significantly, only a small amount of research has been conducted into the effectiveness of disaster mitigation and into the social and psychological impact of disasters.

'*Building an Open Platform for Natural Disaster Resilience Decisions*' reinforces last year's Roundtable recommendation that the work of developing resilient communities should be elevated to the centre of government decision-making through the appointment of a National Resilience Adviser within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. This role would deliver more effective and efficient co-ordination of data management and research through the development of a national research agenda.

It also recommends that the National Resilience Adviser be supported by a Business and Community Advisory Group to facilitate a more co-ordinated response and ensure that business and the not-for-profit sector are represented at the highest levels of policy development and decision-making.

For more information and a copy of today's report '*Building an Open Platform for Natural Disaster Resilience Decisions*' and, the White Paper '*Building Our Nation's Resilience to Natural Disasters*':

www.australianbusinessroundtable.com.au

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

The Roundtable members are the Chief Executive Officers of the Australian Red Cross, Insurance Australia Group, Investa Property Group, Munich Re, Optus and Westpac. Members of the Roundtable have come together to 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.

Media Contact

Paul Marriage
T 02 9292 9557
M 0401751860
paul.marriage@iag.com.au



AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS, CEO, Robert Tickner

“With better research we will have a far better understanding of the humanitarian and psychosocial impacts disasters have on individuals and communities. This will help us increase people’s resilience by delivering better preparedness and recovery programs. Being prepared is key to recovery and can help people and communities get back on their feet more quickly.”



IAG, CEO, Mike Wilkins

“Without access to accurate, relevant, up-to-date research and data you simply cannot make well-informed decisions. This new approach will change the way Government delivers critical information on natural disasters to those that need it. At its heart, this issue is about people and communities and how we keep each other safe.”



INVESTA, CEO, Campbell Hanan

“When you consider that just \$1 now saves \$10 post a disaster, it doesn’t make sense not to invest in strengthening our buildings, changing our planning laws and safeguarding our communities. To do this effectively we need a national framework for funding resilience investment and research and an accessible, open source platform that enables more informed decision making on how to better protect Australians from natural disasters.”



MUNICH RE, CEO, Heinrich Eder

“The paper delivered last year by the Roundtable highlighted the pressing need for a more coordinated approach to pre-disaster resilience management by government, business and the wider community. Building upon those findings, this report addresses the globally recognised need for open platforms that provide timely access by all parties to accurate & consistent research that will help make the well informed decisions required to help save lives and property.”



OPTUS, CEO Group Consumer, Paul O’Sullivan

“Optus has an important role to play in natural disaster resilience to ensure that people remain connected. We reference thousands of data sets and research to plan our networks, the location of base stations and to manage traffic, but acknowledge that it’s not a level playing field when it comes to accessing data. With the emergence of new technologies and efficient methods of sharing data, it’s the perfect time to support open access to critical data. This will contribute to the economic growth, prosperity and resilience of Australia.”



WESTPAC, Enterprise Executive, Peter Hanlon

“As Australia’s first bank, Westpac plays a key role in helping Australian businesses, families and individuals invest in homes, buildings and infrastructure. We need everyone involved in shaping Australia’s future to have access to better data and research. This is important for all our customers – whether they’re buying a home, building a road, or investing in a pipeline. This information should be easy to access, and nationally consistent – to ensure that the nation’s homes, buildings and infrastructure are resilient, and better able to withstand the effects of disasters.”